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ANNIVERSARY OF CO-OPERATION
IN OLDHAM
1900




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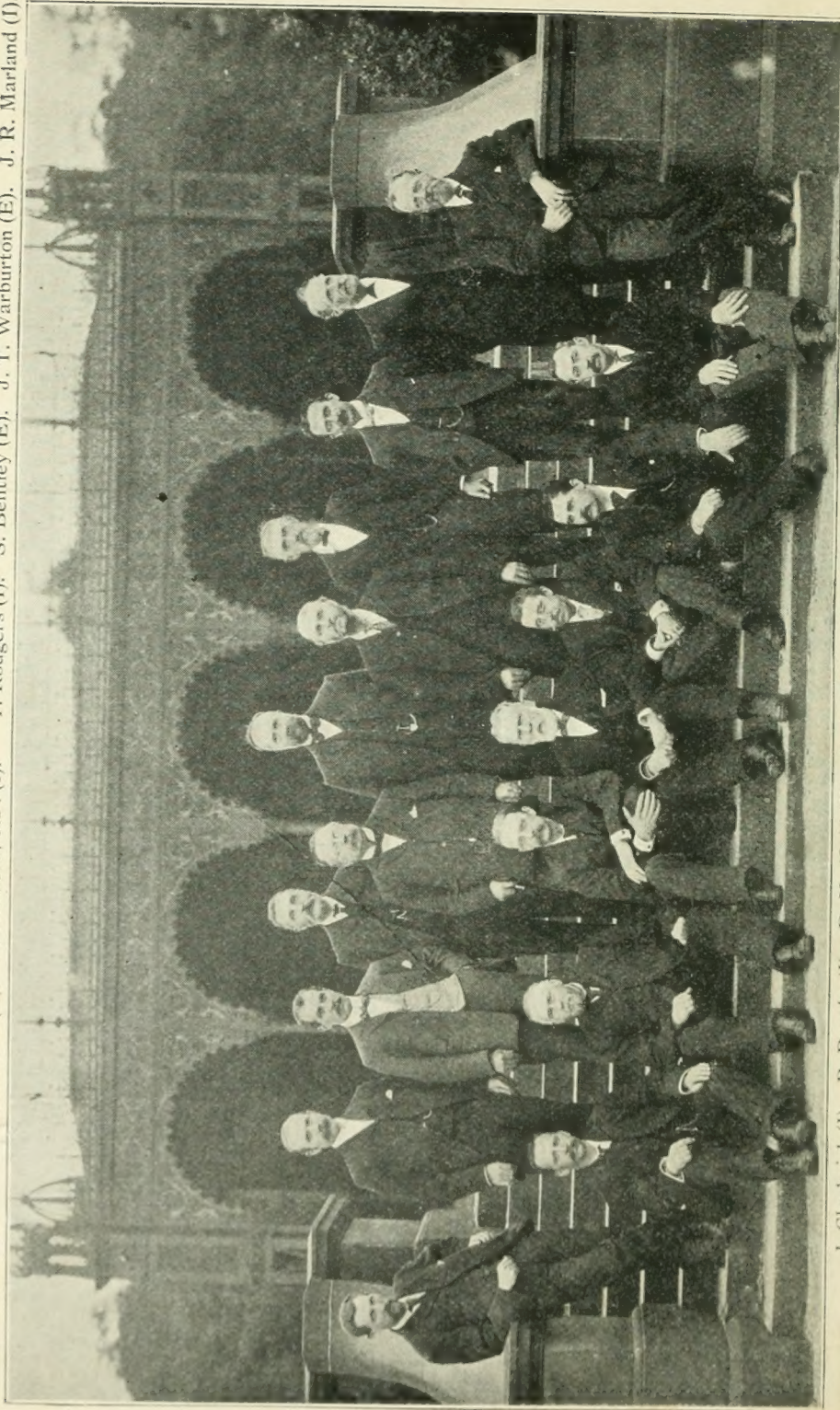
INDUSTRIAL
CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY LTD





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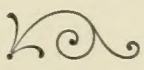


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JUBILEE COMMITTEE.

THE
JUBILEE HISTORY

OF THE

Oldham Industrial 
Co-operative Society Limited.

1850-1900.

By J. T. TAYLOR.



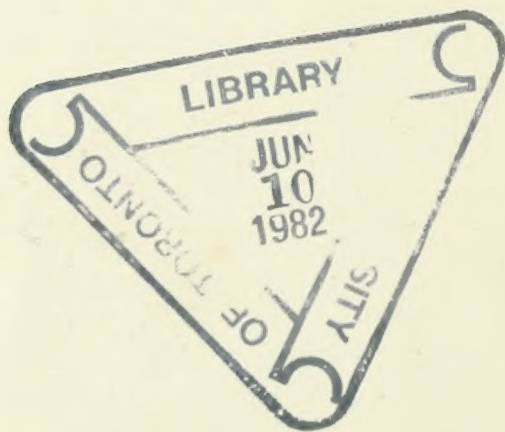
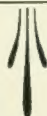
MANCHESTER:
THE CO-OPERATIVE WHOLESALE SOCIETY'S PRINTING WORKS,
HAMILTON ROAD, LONGSIGHT.

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PRINTING WORKS,
LONGSIGHT, MANCHESTER.



Preface.

THERE is no attempt in this short history to give anything approaching a detailed account of the struggles and the triumphs of the men and women who have made the Oldham Industrial Co-operative Society what it is. To do that a much larger volume would be necessary. It is possible, under these circumstances, that much may have been omitted that ought to have been included, and something may have been included that, in the opinion of some people, should have been omitted.

It is impossible to present a complete statement of the growth of the various departments because in the early stages of the Society the balance sheets were only written and read to the members at the Quarterly Meetings. Unfortunately those records have not been preserved. The Registrar-General has been communicated with, but with no better result. The desired returns have been destroyed.

The minute books, however, are available from the commencement, and with the aid of these, supplemented by the recollections of a few of the old pioneers, three of whom are still living, it is hoped that a narrative has been compiled which will be sufficiently interesting to ensure a perusal of the book by all those into whose hands it may fall.

Oldham does not loom largely in history. It can boast of no illustrious families with ancient lineage. It has no ducal palaces nor lordly mansions. It has neither lords spiritual nor temporal of its own, though occasionally one of these will make a brief visit either on religious or political business. It has neither a knight nor a baronet to add dignity to its state or lustre to its proceedings. It has a Mayor, but he is not a

PREFACE.

Lord Mayor ; it has Aldermen, but they are not Aldermen for life ; it has Councillors whose ambition is to become Aldermen and Mayors, and it has common burgesses. Its people are all commoners. There were a few old halls scattered about the place, but some of them have disappeared, some have degenerated into public restaurants, and a few have been turned into ordinary dwelling-houses.

The only ancient feature about the town is the character of its people. They are acknowledged everywhere to be a rough, hard-working race. Not long ago, according to Butterworth, the Oldham historian, the few inhabitants in and around the old village were chiefly interested in the woollen trade. The moors, whose names are now so familiar to us, though their significance is almost lost, have long since ceased to afford grazing ground for sheep. The air about them vibrates with the whirl of machinery, and the face of them is covered over with mills, workshops, and cottages. To the people who live and move, and almost have the whole of their being in these mills and workshops the Co-operative Movement has proved a friend, and a history of the town would be incomplete that took no account of the great social reform by which the people have been made more comfortable and happy.

My thanks are due to many personal friends for their valuable assistance, which in every case has been most kindly given, and particularly would I express my gratitude to Mr. Harrison, the Secretary of the Oldham Industrial Society, for the willingness with which he has compiled and supplied much of the statistical information contained in this book.

J. T. TAYLOR.

November, 1900.

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John W. Mayall, Jos. Taylor, Peter Brooks, Thos. Harrison
Joshua Newton Treasurer, Vice-President, (Clerk, Manager), (Secretary),

Enos Marland, Samuel Grimshaw,



John Chadwick, Watts Gartside, Thos. A. Watson (*President*), John Sutcliffe, John W. Stott.

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT.



CHAPTER I.

Oldham Fifty Years Ago.

Owdham is a bonny teawn,
Ther' isn't sich another;
There's heauses up one side o'th' street
An' ess* middens up th' other.

There's o sorts o' places, and o mak's o' faces,
But Owdham, brave Owdham, for me.



HE history of Co-operation in Oldham is so inseparable from the history of the town itself that a brief introductory glance at the extraordinary progress of the people, as a community, may be excusable, if not necessary. The town can be said to have been largely made what it is by Co-operation, and the prosperity of the Co-operative movement, locally, may be attributed to the favourable conditions of its surroundings. Both have mutually aided each other, and both have benefited by the contact.

If you would know what an article really is you must know of what it is made. Some years ago a representative of the Co-operative Wholesale Society waited upon the Committee of one of the Oldham Societies with reference to the quality of the boots and shoes manufactured by that great federation. He offered to take any boot of the Wholesale Society's make from the shop and compare it with the productions of any private manufacturer. He would cut the

boots up and show the Committee of what materials they were actually made. So, if you would know what Oldham Co-operators are you must learn what they were, what were their surroundings, and how they emancipated themselves.

You must go back fifty years and see what the town was that was to provide such a favourable ground for the growth of Co-operation, and of what were the people made who were to prove such excellent husbandmen in nurturing and cultivating the young and tender plant.

It is well known that the man who has sailed the roughest seas and braved the fiercest storms, as a rule, makes the safest mariner. It is an equally well-known fact that the industrial towns which suffered so much in consequence of the Corn Laws, the Crimean War, and the American Civil War have been amongst the most successful in their efforts to establish Co-operation on an extensive and enduring basis. Their lives of heroic struggle, manly self-sacrifice, and patient endurance have yielded a rich and abundant harvest.

John Strange Winter says that "perfection is only attained through suffering, and no man or woman is fitted for the higher life save those who have suffered." These pioneers not only attained that higher life, but have bequeathed a few of its richest blessings to us in the hope that we might strengthen that Co-operative influence which beautifies and ennobles wherever it extends.

A local authority, writing a few years ago of the period which marks the birth of Co-operation, said:—

Fifty years ago domestic life was wretched compared with the comforts and conveniences that are now enjoyed by the poorest and most lowly. . . . The trust system was carried on to an alarming extent amongst the working classes. Few indeed practised thrift and economy, but spent their whole earnings as if it were a matter of necessity to do so. Clothes were got on trust, and butchers' meat was obtained in the same way. The grocers were called "badgers," and every family had its "badger." As soon as the wages were drawn on a Friday or a Saturday night, the wife would go with the "badger's" book in her hand to pay for the week's provisions. Unable to reckon up the book herself, and the husband seldom caring about these matters, she had to depend entirely on the honesty of the person with whom the family had dealings. The week's "score," as it was called, not unfrequently exceeded the week's earnings after the butcher's bill had been paid, and thus at the "badger's" an old "score" was kept continually on the increase. Thus a week behind, another week was

begun on trust, and where the income was pretty fair there were no restraints on the visits to the shop; but when the income was small the visits were seldom and few, and, however few they were, undertaken with a dread of growling and complaining on the part of the "badger," with, perhaps, the unpleasant reminder that the "score" was already too high.

As the foregoing extract indicates, the working people of those days enjoyed comparatively few luxuries. Meal porridge—or "porritch," as it was commonly called—was a necessary daily dish in most families. Our Lancashire authors generally refer to this kind of food with a zest as though it were not altogether unpalatable.

The writer before quoted says:—

When the mills stopped for breakfast at eight in the morning and closed for the day in the evening the different members of a family would hasten to breakfast in one case and to supper in the other. A large "porritch deesh" (dish) filled with "stiffdiicks" would await them, and be placed in the centre of the table. A family of half a dozen or more would soon be seated round, father, mother, sisters, and brothers, each a bowl in hand filled with either "traycle an' wayther" or "greaut," sweetened. A couple of minutes or so and the whole mess was despatched. A "butther cake" or a "traycle cake" after the porritch was looked upon as a luxury, and seldom indulged in. Blue or skimmed milk was generally taken along with the "porritch." Butter-milk was much used, and could be got any day in the street from the hawker.

Jerry Lichenmoss, speaking through one of his characters, the Lord of Mushroom Hall, says:—

I went a livin' at a farm beause when I wur abeaut nine year owd, an' I sary'd seven year an' never knew what it wur for t' have a whole shute o' clooas. What I had wern ta'en in i' numbers, but they'r'n never wo'th bindin'! It wur a good shop for meat an' drink, but it wur of a rough sort. Porridge thirteen times a week, wi' shudes among th' meal an' inch long, an' they'd ha' serat yo'r throat same as if yo'd be'n swallowin' a pincushion. Blynt bo' an' dip wur a luxury, lumps o' dough abeaut buckth o' yo'r fist boilt i' th' broth, no shuit in.

Ben Brierley ("Ab-o'-th'-Yate") says:—

Aw've sin battles for th' getherins off a porritch slice. Aw've sin my feyther byet time to eaur spoons when we'n bin atin us porritch; an' ony on us 'at had dipt his spoon i' th' deesh afore he ceauted ten, an' then said "Dive, lads!" ud had to ha' th' leecast spoon th' mornin' after.

Do not imagine, gentle reader, that these are spicy items conjured up by humorous authors to please their patrons. The

present writer, who entered upon this chequered, but not altogether joyless, stage in less than a month from the opening of the first shop of the Society whose history he is now writing, can testify to experiencing during the days of his boyhood almost all that is portrayed by these faithful delineators of Lancashire character. But the severe restraint thus imposed, and the rigid discipline necessarily enjoined, were largely instrumental in producing a race of people who have gained a world-wide reputation as sturdy, persevering, honest, "gradely" folks. Though not in the enjoyment of wealth they were not despondent, but always cheery and sociable. As one of them was gaily singing one day as he sat picking away at his loom, he was asked by a rich neighbour how he could be so cheerful and yet so poor. "Eh! mesthur," he said, "I haven't time to be unyezzy."

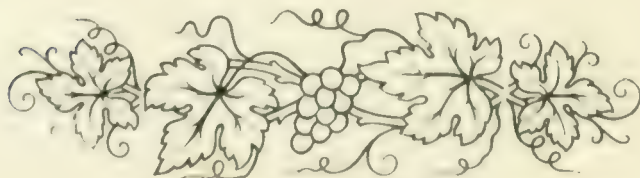
Nor had they. Their riches consisted "not in the extent of their possessions, but in the fewness of their wants." They earned the title of "Owdham Roughyeds," but they were known to be hard workers, diligent, kindly, and generous to a fault.

How they laid the foundations of Industrial Oldham will be seen from a perusal of the following instructive figures:

	1850.		1900.
Population.....	52,818	.....	153,297
Ratable Value of Property	£112,490	.....	£676,162

As Chadderton is within the area covered by the Oldham Industrial Society, a statement of its growth is equally important.

	1850.		1900.
Population.....	6,088	.....	25,500
Ratable Value of Property	£20,635	.....	£138,896

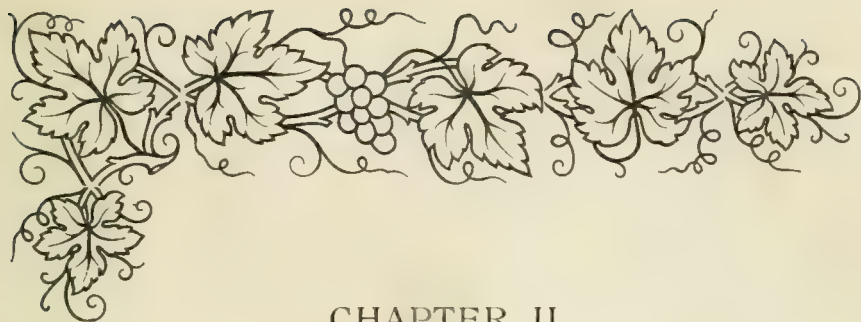




WILLIAM MARCROFT.



WILLIAM BOOTH, *First President.*



CHAPTER II.

How the Society Started.

Wanted: Men—

Not systems fit and wise,
Not faiths with rigid eyes,
Not wealth in mountain piles,
Not power with gracious smiles,
Not e'en the potent pen.
Wanted: Men.

Wanted: Deeds—

Not words for winning note,
Not thoughts from life remote,
Not fond religious airs,
Not sweetly languid prayers,
Not love of sects and creeds.
Wanted: Deeds.

Duncan Mc.Gregor.

THERE were other attempts to form Co-operative Societies in Oldham prior to the establishment of the one whose history is now placed before you, just as there were many Societies commenced in various parts of the country before the birth of the famous Rochdale Pioneers' Society. Into the causes of failure of these worthy struggles it is unnecessary to inquire. We may rest assured that lessons were learned that proved beneficial when the two greater Societies launched forth upon their useful career a little later.

About this time great unrest prevailed throughout the country. Thrones seemed to totter, and the power of the wealthy classes seemed to be slipping away. This was a fruitful time for dreams and dreamers. The agitator was omnipotent. People were daily expecting the abdication of the Queen and the overthrow of the Lords and Commons. It was at this time that neither systems nor words were wanted, but men. Newspapers were few, and ignorance fanned the flame of discontent. Groups of men were wont to meet in and about the market place and near the Town Hall discussing the political situation

with an earnestness and a vehemence that would be considered folly to-day.

But amongst these groups which met on the Town Hall steps was one composed of a few men who, it was noticed, indulged in no wild rhetoric nor seemed to anticipate an improvement in their position by a general division of the wealth of others. They clamoured not for the compulsory exile of monarchs and statesmen, they pinned not their faith in "systems fit and wise;" they realised that if their position must be redeemed they must redeem themselves.

Hereditary bondsmen, know ye not
Who would be free themselves must strike the blow?

These men wished to be free, but they resolved not to wait for the favours of either princes or statesmen. They determined to free themselves. The example of Rochdale was a beacon light to them. One or two of them had been to see the wondrous development themselves. There was little railway travelling at that time, and nobody dreamt of trams, but people thought little then of walking several miles for either business or pleasure.

The preliminary steps taken to form a Co-operative Society in Oldham are quaintly given in a letter written by Mr. William Booth, the first President of the Society. He says:—

The first time of talking about forming a Store, as we then called it, took place one Sunday evening on the Town Hall steps. There were five of us present, William Booth, William Marcroft, William Mills, James Wild, and another I did not know. Our discourse turned on working men fighting at elections, and we thought that it ought to be put down some way or other. It happened that William Marcroft had either been to or heard of the Rochdale Pioneers' Society, and he told us how they were going on, so we thought that was the right way of changing things, as we should associate more together and might turn things in a different direction, as it was always shopkeepers that were sworn in as special constables, and they took care to use their staves when they had got a lot of working men drunk and mad. At last we all agreed to attend a meeting if one was called for the purpose of forming a Society. So one Sunday morning William Marcroft came to us and said that a meeting was being held that afternoon at two o'clock, at George Winterbottom's, in Royton Street, for the purpose of forming a Co-operative Society, so I promised to attend and take as many with me as I could, so I got John Booth Lees and William Booth Lees to go with me. On our arrival we only found William Marcroft, George Winterbottom, and James Jackson were there, but were busy with their baths and herbs, so we had it to ourselves.

It should be explained here that this George Winterbottom prescribed treatment for physical as well as social diseases. His house in Royton Street was a sort of medical dispensary, and the attention of the public was drawn to it by the significant words on a signboard:—"George Winterbottom, Medical Botanist."

As you entered the shop a peculiar perfume greeted you, and the many-tinted bottles on the shelves round the room seemed to welcome you. The writer has still a vivid recollection of the infallible remedy for all ills that flesh is heir to—"Third Preparation." The name used to assume the dignity and proportions of a world-wide compound before it was realised that a first or even a second preparation might play some little part in the celebrated treatment. It always seemed somehow that "Third Preparation" was the only safe cure, but in cases of doubt there was always the wooden box upstairs in which the patient would sit, with only his head exposed to view, whilst his body would be undergoing a system of perspiration by steam in the hope that the malady might be boiled out of him. A shock, and a gasp, under the cold shower bath, and the patient was once more a free man. Yet this was the birthplace of the Oldham Industrial Co-operative Society.

Mr. Booth goes on to state, in his interesting letter, that, whilst the others were engaged in their medical pursuits, they read and discussed a copy of rules which Mr. Marcroft had obtained from the Rochdale Pioneers' Society. The scheme, which previously had appeared to be without form and void, now began to take shape, and the first meeting ended with a decision to meet again the following evening if the use of the room could again be granted. Permission was readily conceded, and the second meeting was attended by nineteen persons. This was a tremendous increase, and the enthusiasm of the new reformers rose in a corresponding degree. Nothing would satisfy them only more meetings. They resolved to meet at one another's houses, and we are told that such meetings were held at William Booth's, William Marcroft's, John Davenport's, Stewart Smethurst's, and others.

The first meeting officially recorded is described in the minute book as a "Preliminary Meeting at William Marcroft's, 1, York Street, Oldham, on Wednesday evening, November

13th, 1850; Mr. George Winterbottom in the chair." The following persons were elected officers of the Society: -

President -William Booth; Secretary—Edward Clegg; Treasurer -George Winterbottom; Trustees -James Lees, William Marcroft, and Swainson Howarth; Board of Directors -John Booth, John Davenport, James Jackson, Henry Barlow, and Edward Barlow; Auditors Thomas Schofield and John Booth Lees.

It was resolved at this meeting "That this Society be called by the name of 'The Oldham Industrial Co-operative Society.'"

The new Committee met at Mr. Marcroft's on the Friday evening of the same week, November 15th, 1850, and solemnly resolved that if capital could be raised to the amount of £50 they would at once commence business. This was £22 more than had been raised at first by the Rochdale Pioneers, and the gravity of the step was not underrated. It was felt to be a delicate question to ask a man how much money he could pay down on or before a given day, or how much he could subscribe by weekly instalments, so the device was adopted of two of their number being told off as a kind of Sub-Committee, who sat in the back kitchen, before whom the regenerators of society were to attend singly and secretly declare the extent of their ability to give a fair start to the new departure. Fifty pounds seemed a huge amount, and there were fears that the combined capital of all of them would fail to reach it. But when the promises were totalled up it was found that they amounted, in the words of William Booth, to "£56 odd." What the "odd" shillings and pence were is not known - probably never will be known now. Harold Skimpole used to remember the pence and forget the pounds.

We can only record the fact that "£56 odd" was the practical faith these men had in the new movement. It represented determination, economy, self-sacrifice. At this meeting a Mr. Hyde deposited £3 on shares, but it was returned to him until someone had been appointed and bound to take care of the money. Another member created some astonishment by applying for five shares of £1 each and proposing that they should contribute threepence per share per week until the shares were paid up. What! subscribe one shilling and threepence per week? Surely he must be possessed of

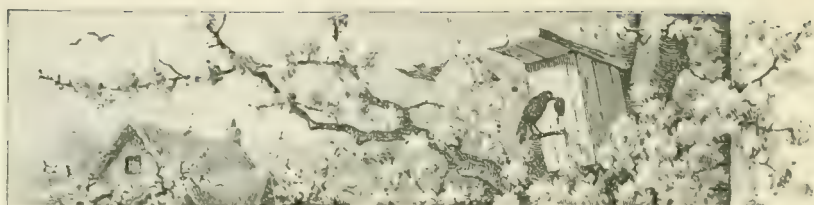
a little gold mine somewhere. Much as they admired his courage they were not in a position to follow his worthy example. With a somewhat despondent expression one member muttered, "We're not o Rothchilds."

The Committee was next divided into sections in order that there might be an equitable division and a speedy despatch of labour. Some were told off to visit the various ironmongers and brokers of the town to ascertain the prices of scales and weights, others were to prepare the rules for adoption, and the President was to purchase an abstract of the Act of Parliament relating to Joint Stock Companies.

At the next meeting, November 20th, 1850, it was resolved, among other important matters, to adopt the rules of the Rochdale Pioneers, "to look out for a shop for a Store for this Society," and to purchase a pair of scales, price seventeen shillings, for weighing sugar and coffee.

And that was how the Oldham Industrial Co-operative Society started.





CHAPTER III.

Dreams and Dreamers.

Dreams
Are but the light of clearer skies
Too dazzling for our naked eyes,
And when we catch their flashing beams
We turn aside and call them dreams.
O, trust me, every thought that yet
In greatness rose, in sorrow set,
That Time to ripening glory nurs'd,
Was called an idle dream at first.

Ernest Jones.

ONE of the chief characteristics of the people about the time of the birth of Co-operation was their grim, steadfast determination. The poverty which surrounded them and hemmed them in, the wear and tear of bone and muscle through the excessive and oppressive hours of labour, the subjection under which they writhed, brought about by unequal and unjust laws, combined to make them deadly in earnest. They were passing through a great crisis. They were witnessing and experiencing an evolution in the conditions of labour such as the world had never seen before. The old order of things was passing away; what would be the new?

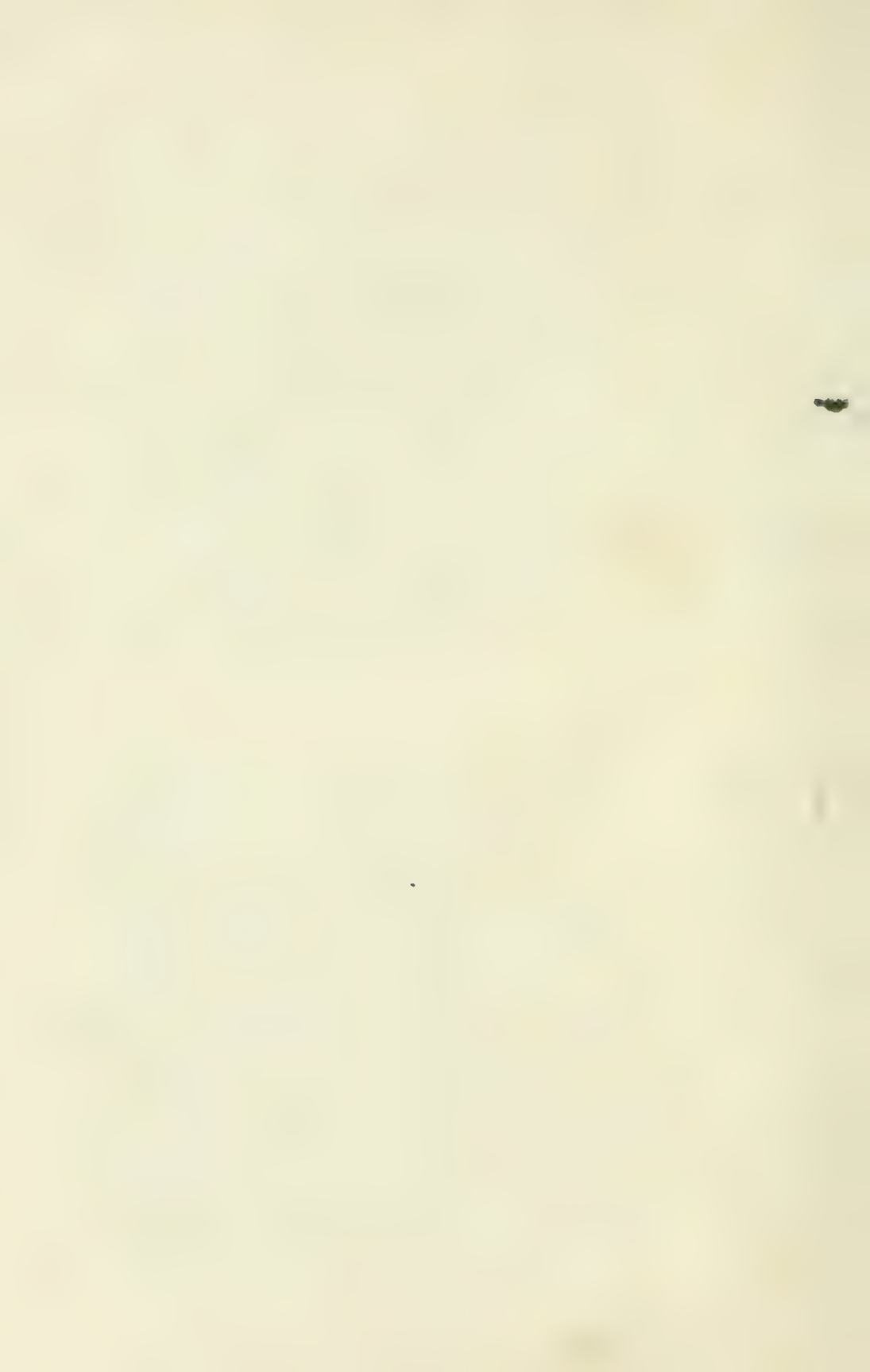
This is no figurative language. Students of history know that the first half of the nineteenth century saw a gigantic displacement of hand labour by machinery. The effect of this was the rapid development of the factory system. The conditions, manners, and customs of the people underwent a swift and irresistible change. Capitalists and factory owners were the first to profit by the change. The accumulation of wealth by the wealthy was marvellous, whilst not only were the wages



JAMES LEES.



SWAINSON HOWARTH.



of the workers less, but the liberty and comfort which they enjoyed under the old system of home labour were utterly destroyed.

It was the remembrance of all this that embittered the people and made them resolute. The tyranny of the times was the cause of widespread poverty and general dissatisfaction, but it had this compensating feature—it made men. Dreamers, some people called them. They dreamt of brighter and happier days for their fellow-men, for their brothers and sisters, and for themselves. They could not think that the dark cloud under which they lived would hover over them and their children and children's children for ever. They loved to picture the bright and sunny sky beyond. They could not bear the thought that their lot should always be sad and sorrowful, and that the labour of their hands should only go to increase the luxuries of others. They lacked power, they lacked wealth, but they did not despair. They set about removing the obstacles one by one. They were men of grit, before whom even kings and statesmen bowed.

Charles Sumner once said, "Three things are necessary—first, backbone; second, backbone; third, backbone."

These men, though they had often an empty cupboard and an empty stomach, had strong and reliable backbones. Times of depression are not all loss. We owe nearly all of good that we possess to adversity and not to prosperity. Had people been comfortable and happy there would have been no reform legislation. Had the people been prosperous during the period referred to there would have been no Co-operation. We can easily understand, therefore, that the men of that day were strong, firm, and resolute; were not only dreamers but workers, were not only hewers of wood and drawers of water but heroic fighters in the battle of life. Such were the men who laid the foundation of Co-operation in Oldham.

After the meeting mentioned at the close of the last chapter the social reformers attending did not go straight home to dream the dream of peace. They were too anxious, too full of zeal for that. Besides, the night was a beautiful one. "The moon had lit her lamp above," and under its soft and mellow light they agreed to go at once and seek suitable premises in which they might start business. They visited several places, but ultimately fixed upon a house in King Street as being the

most likely to meet their requirements. They were advised, however, that it was too good for them (fancy anything being too good for Co-operators now!), and as they coincided with that view upon examination, and especially as they would be called upon to give a guarantee to leave the place exactly as they found it upon removal, they abandoned it and renewed their searches elsewhere. It happened that just at this time Andrew Schofield was altering and repairing some shops in Manchester Street, and after considerable discussion and reflection it was thought advisable to ascertain whether and upon what terms they could rent one of them. A deputation was appointed on November 23rd to wait upon Mr. Schofield, and they were to call a meeting as soon as possible to give their report. There was no unnecessary delay with these men. There is no room for red-tapeism when men are in earnest.

The meeting to receive the deputation's report was the most numerous attended of any up to this point. It was held at William Booth's, John Street, off Manchester Street, on Friday evening, November 29th, 1850, and there were so many desirous of being present that the house would not hold them all, and some had to remain standing in the street. The story of these men's dream had spread, and now some had come to see and hear for themselves what this new doctrine was. Some were probably there from sympathy, some from curiosity, and some on pure business intent.

Amongst those who at this period dreamt of a brighter future and worked to hasten its dawn William Booth mentions the following:—

William Marcroft.
John Booth Lees.
James Lees.
Thos. Schofield.
James Jackson.
Ann Hilton.
Jane Robertshaw.
Matthew Blackshaw.
Henry Hewkin.
Elijah Hewkin.
John Folson.
William Bolton.
Thos. Bardsley.
Henry Barlow.
James Johnson.

William Booth.
Wm. Booth Lees.
John Booth.
George Winterbottom.
John Lees.
Mary Hyde.
Thomas Mills.
Henry Walker.
John Anderson.
Squire Ashton.
Jas. Schofield.
John Bolton.
Edward Barlow.
Edward Clegg.
Geo. Whitehead.

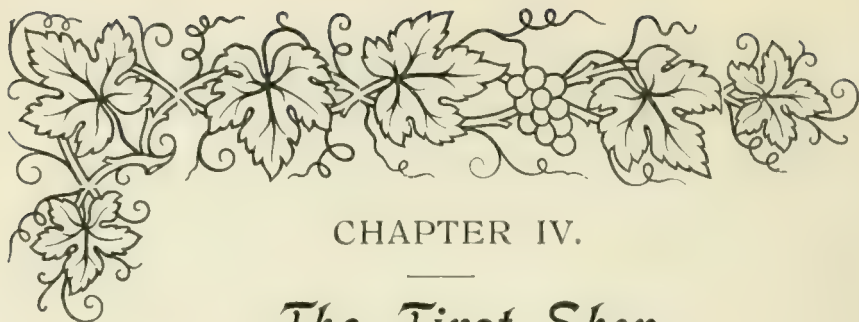
Elias Jackson.
 John Heywood.
 William Whitehead.
 John Hollingworth.
 William Grindrod.
 Enias Barratt.
 Samuel Yardley.
 George Marks.
 James Whittaker.

Samuel Heywood.
 Thomas Yardley.
 James Scholes.
 Edward Gartside.
 Joseph Hood.
 Jas. Mackey.
 John Davenport.
 Stewart Smethurst.
 Swainson Howarth.

It will be noticed that in this list of worthy pioneers there are the names of three women. They were indispensable. They are indispensable yet. Mr. Booth does not define the work which these women did, but it is not difficult to make a pretty accurate guess. These meetings at the homes of the zealous promoters meant additional work for the women. Even when the shop was opened most of the work was practically of an honorary nature, and a large portion of it fell to the women.

“Drudgery” perhaps some one will say. Yes, “drudgery,” if you like, but there are conditions under which “e’en servile labours shine.” “It is a grander thing to be nobly remembered than to be nobly born.” The office of crossing sweeper is as necessary, and as honourable, as that of Prime Minister. Those who control and carry out the details of the food supply to our armies of men and horses on the field of battle are just as necessary, and as honourably employed, as the commander himself, though their breasts are not adorned with the Victoria Cross, nor their names conspicuously mentioned in the despatches. So the women fed, and encouraged, and inspired the pioneers of the movement.

When the deputation returned they found the large meeting anxiously waiting for their report, but when they announced that the rent would be £30 per year there were those who doubted the propriety of incurring such a heavy liability. It is said that he who hesitates is lost. There was no danger of the early Co-operative efforts being lost through hesitancy. It was at once decided to take the shop, and the meeting was adjourned to their own premises, where they pulled down a shutter and entered into legal possession. The premises have undergone some little alteration, but No. 65, Manchester Street, can still be recognised as the first shop of the Oldham Industrial Co-operative Society.



CHAPTER IV.

The First Shop.

The smallest effort is not lost ;
Each wavelet on the ocean tossed
Aids in the ebb tide or the flow ;
Each raindrop makes some floweret blow,
Each struggle lessens human woe.

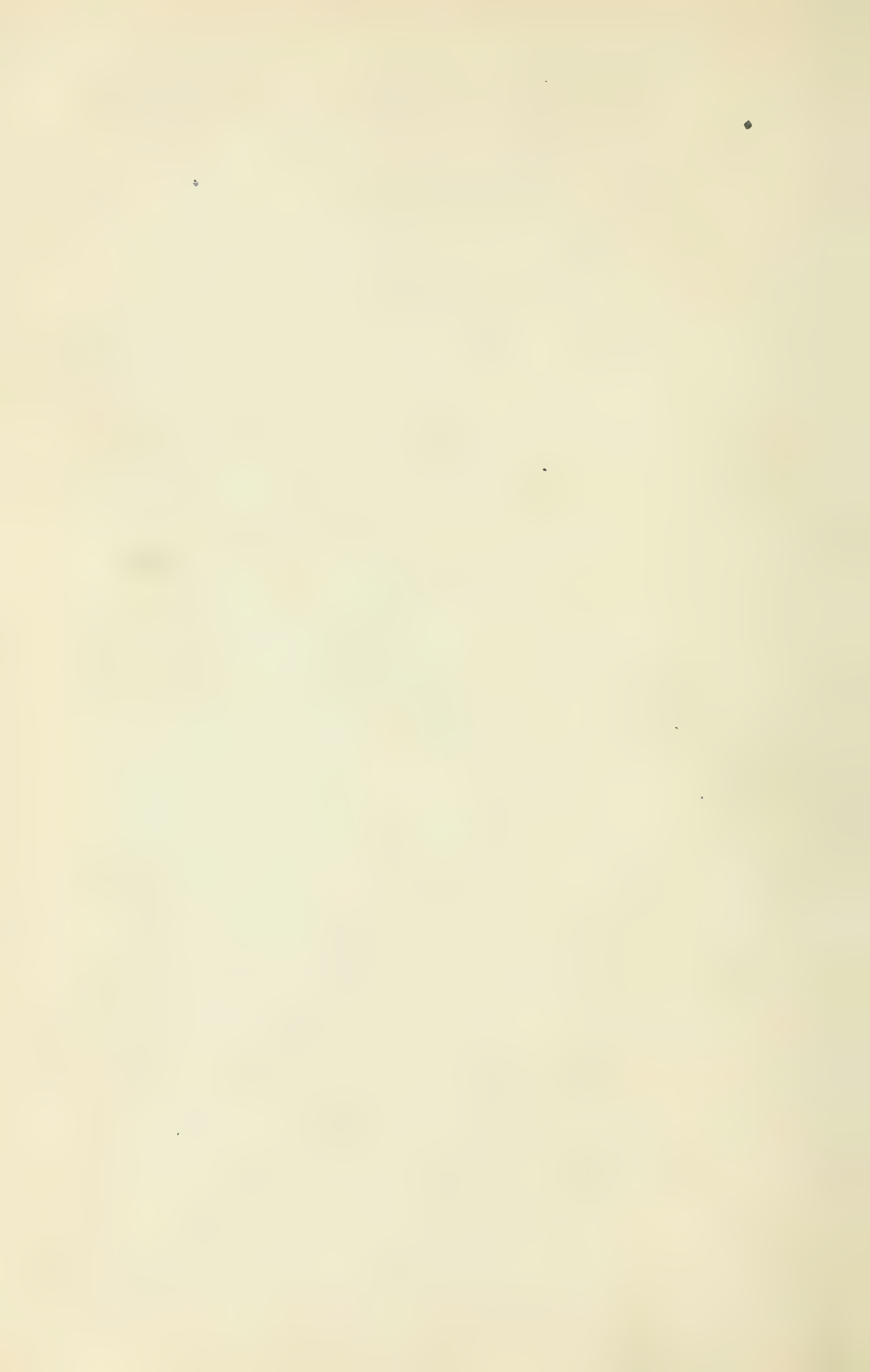
Do you remember your first days of housekeeping, or, as people used to call it, "settin' up heause?" Of course, you do. Whoever forgets it? What a delightful and sensational time it was, to be sure. Your wife was not your wife then, but you were equally interested in stocking the house that was to be your home with furniture. You were not too proud then to go into any shop where it was probable you might get anything which it was thought possible you would require. Looking back upon it now, the event has probably lost some of its apparent importance, but at that time it had momentous issues for you. You were starting life on your own account. What would be the measure of your success? You felt the responsibilities, and you tried to act as though you realised them.

Do you remember looking as sober as a judge when you found your money going beautifully less and still your house was not full? It was an anxious if it was a happy time.

It was even so with the first Co-operative shop. The contract to pay £30 a year for the use of a bare shop was no light matter for a body of poor men. But in addition to this there was the furnishing even before the idea could be entertained of purchasing goods for sale. So the Committee set to work in earnest; they divided themselves into Sub-Committees, and at once took into hand such important matters as shop-fittings, including forms, counters, shelves,



SHOP IN WHICH THE SOCIETY COMMENCED BUSINESS.



canisters, and gas fittings. The Committee met two or three times per week, though the Committee-men met each other almost every night. There was always something to do and always plenty of willing hands to do it. When work was finished for the night the members would stay a little while, seated upon tubs or anything they could find, discussing the probable progress of their new venture. But there were times when neither their unbounded enthusiasm nor their shop labour could maintain the body at a comfortable temperature, and so the Committee, at one of its meetings, passed a resolution like this:—"That this meeting immediately adjourn to Wm. Marcroft's, York Street, on account of the coldness and dampness of the Store."

But it must be remembered that this was in the month of December. There was no fire because they had no coal, and the Committee-men had no salary for attendance at meetings. However, a load of coals was ordered; there were no bags then, nor even coal merchants. The coal merchant is a middleman of a later period. But neither the dampness nor the coldness prevented a speedy transformation in the shop, and so jubilant were all concerned that they began to talk of an early opening.

Try to picture the zeal and determination of these men. They had not had the shop many days but they wanted to be doing business. A good deal of the capital deposited had already been spent, but the ardour of those who had spent it was in no way abated. They must open the shop. What money was left must be utilised for the purchase of groceries for sale when the shop was opened. So the Committee was again divided into Sub-Committees for the purchasing of goods to stock the shop.

It was decided to open the shop on December 26th, although there were many preparations yet to be made. But these men seemed to thrive upon work. In addition to helping to fix counters, shelves, &c., and visiting nearly all the ironmongers in the town for the necessary using articles, and the interviews with wholesale dealers in selling commodities, these men succeeded, between November 29th, when it was resolved to take the shop, and December 26th, when the shop was opened, in having no fewer than thirteen recorded Board meetings and four General Meetings of members.

As the time for opening drew near the anxiety grew in intensity, and meetings were held almost daily. Thus the Committee met on Friday, December 20th, to decide upon what nights the shop should be open; to open in the daytime did not come within the scope of their wildest dreams. After much earnest deliberation it was resolved that the shop hours be as follow:—Tuesdays, 7 to 9-30 p.m.; Fridays, 7 to 10 p.m.; and Saturdays, 3-30 to 10-30 p.m. Then there was the question of engaging shopmen, or waiters, as they are designated in the minute book.

It is refreshing and instructive to find how these men not only attended the Committee meetings and assisted in fitting-up the shop, but were willing to render still further aid by serving behind the counter. John Booth was elected to fill the office of No. 1 waiter, and William Lees No. 2. Edward Barlow was appointed No. 3, with his duties thus specifically defined, "to weigh butter, cheese, &c." Joseph Bradbury was the fourth waiter, and he was to weigh flour, meal, &c. At a subsequent meeting of members it was deemed advisable that these men should receive some acknowledgment for their services, and it was agreed that they should be paid at the rate of three-half-pence per hour. It would be difficult to find examples of greater devotion than these.

In fairness it ought to be stated, however, that in a few cases the Society was not able to pay what was desired, nor what they would have liked to pay. Even where payment was made it was not supposed to represent an adequate return for services rendered. This will explain one or two changes in the officers of the Society without reflecting discredit upon anyone concerned, and it will show that no one was tempted to seek an official position on account of the liberality of the remuneration offered. The Secretary was voted five shillings for his services from the commencement of the Society to the opening of the Store, and the salary attached to the office was fixed at fifteen shillings per quarter. The Treasurer's salary was put at the same figure; whilst the Auditors, for the first quarter, were to receive sixpence each for their labour.

A point for discussion at several meetings was the question of who should take out the licence for the sale of tea, tobacco, &c., which would, of course, carry with it the honour of the

licensee having his name on the sign over the door. This was necessary because the law at that period did not allow Co-operative Societies to take licences in the names of the Societies. It was finally agreed that William Marcroft should take out the licence, to be in readiness for the opening of the Store. The name of this person and his high office had to be painted on a signboard and placed over the door. The notice said: "William Marcroft, licensed to sell Tea, Coffee, Tobacco, &c."

Christmas Day was an eventful day to these Co-operative pioneers. It was not solely on account of the hallowed associations connected with this season of the year—though in any other year they could have joined the festivities and reciprocated the good wishes which crowd around Christmas with more freedom and greater zest—but it was eventful because of the suspense by which they felt themselves to be surrounded. They were opening the Store to-morrow, and the place did not look half ready. It was like a party, or a bazaar, or an exhibition; everything looks topsy-turvy until within a few minutes of the appointed time for opening. Then, as if by the waving of a magic wand, chaos disappears and order reigns.

Chaos disappeared in this case through the agency of active, though not very deft, fingers. Imagine people of various occupations and of varying ages, who had never in their lives made up a pound of currants, a quarter of a pound of tea, or an ounce of tobacco, trying all Christmas Day to make these goods appear in an attractive and acceptable form. If one of those bags could have been secured for the Jubilee Exhibition it would not only have been a valuable curiosity, but it would have been a memento of a determined and courageous struggle with difficulties, and a heroic resolve to succeed in spite of the derision of a jeering and unsympathetic crowd of onlookers outside.

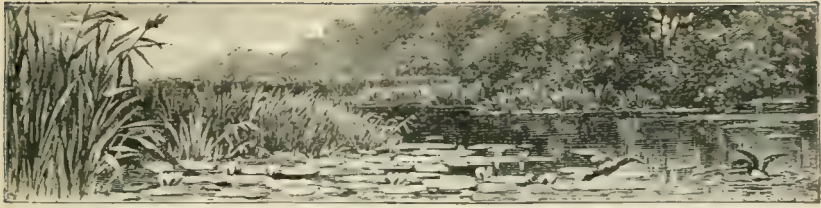
It is almost impossible to comprehend the magnitude of the task which these faithful workers had set themselves to accomplish. They were not only called upon, without any experience, to serve in the shop and make up the goods in a presentable manner, but they had to buy the goods and see that they had value for their money. Instances might be cited where traders attempted to take advantage of their want of skill in judging the qualities of different articles, but it is

unnecessary to do so, and it would only serve to recall unpleasant memories. Allusion is simply made to it to show the difficulties with which the early Co-operators had to contend. With the gigantic establishments of to-day and their trained and experienced Managers, Committees and members do not feel the same anxiety relative to the supply of goods that was felt by their earliest predecessors. At many of the modern Co-operative Conferences the all-important question is discussed as to whether Committees or Managers should buy. The pioneers of Co-operation were never perplexed with any such problems. They appointed one or two of their Board of Management to be "purchasers," but the Committee jealously watched over every purchase. The first "purchasers" of the Industrial Society were appointed by the members in General Meeting assembled. On the 18th December, 1850, it was resolved—"That James Lees and George Winterbottom be elected purchasers for this Society." That their responsibilities were somewhat limited is evident from the constant appearance on the Committee's minutes of such resolutions as these: "That our Secretary correspond with the soap dealers in Liverpool, and also with the corn dealers in the district;" "That our Secretary correspond with Mr. Garside, of Mossley, to know the lowest price of his butter;" "That we have five loads of flour from the Rochdale District Corn Mill Society."

Besides this supervision, the Board fixed the selling price of all the goods. Members would probably be amused at the present time by resolutions of the following character, which were then of almost weekly occurrence:—"That canary and rape seed be sold at 2½d. per pound and 3½lbs. for 8d.;" "That common treacle be sold at 2d. per pound and 3lbs. for 5½d.;" "That meal be sold at 1s. 4d. per doz., and raisins and currants 5d. per pound."

Such were the problems that presented themselves for solution not only after but on and before that eventful Christmas Day. But the greater the problem the greater the need to solve it.

Though before you mountains rise,
Go ahead!
Scale them! certainly you can;
Let them proudly dare the skies;
What are mountains to a man?
Go ahead!



CHAPTER V.

Progress.

Think not of failure or success,
He fails who has a low desire ;
Up to the highest ever press.
Still onward, upward, higher ! higher !

THE shop was duly and successfully opened on December 26th, 1850. There was no ceremony. Neither Princes nor Nobles, Lords nor Commoners, were invited. Not even the Mayor, nor the Aldermen, nor Councillors of the newly-incorporated borough graced the assembly with their presence. They were not asked. But a good many of the burgesses were there, watching the proceedings from the street, and ridiculing the efforts of the enthusiastic reformers who were going to leaven the world from their little and insignificant adventure in Manchester Street. The shop did not present any very imposing appearance. It had large plate glass windows on each side of the door, but they had little withal to fill them, to say nothing of decorating them. One window was dressed with sugar, currants, &c., and the other was covered with brown paper. There was some timidity shown by some inside the building at the thought of opening with such a small and unattractive display, but it was only temporary. At the appointed time the door was thrown open, and the members began at once to supply their own wants at their own shop.

One of the first difficulties with which they had to contend was the question of keeping the books. None of them had

received an education which was supposed to qualify them for the important position of a bookkeeper. Bookkeepers of those days had an idea that their qualifications entitled them to move in a higher sphere than that occupied by those fanatical Co-operators who tenanted only one small shop. But the bookkeeping difficulty was overcome, and a system established whereby dividend could be apportioned at the end of the quarter according to the purchases of each individual member.

The course taken by the Committee, when this Society commenced, was to get a large number of sheets printed, on which appeared the name of every article sold, with columns opposite for the insertion of the amount spent on such articles. When the purchases for that visit were concluded the various amounts would be added up, and the sheet passed on to the Shop Secretary for posting and for receiving the money. It took a little time for the women, when buying in, to accustom themselves to the rule, and often did it occur that when some good lady was squaring her accounts with the Secretary she would suddenly remember some important omission, and would ejaculate—"Eh! if aw hanno' forgotten 'bacca!" Then she would have to take her paper back, and the whole business of the shop would stop until she had been supplied with the necessary "'bacca." But incidents such as these, common enough in a new development of Society, serve a useful purpose. They have a mollifying and socialising influence. They temper the hard and the rugged earnestness of the new reformers. The tension of a man's mind, due to constant straining, has a tendency to make him harsh and ungentle, but little humorous incidents, provided by nature, often step in, and, by a gentle touch, upset his stock of gravity and restore him once more to the great family of human kind. Thus, notwithstanding the blunders—and there were many of them—and the ludicrous situations which were repeatedly presenting themselves, and in spite of enormous and almost overwhelming obstacles, these vigorous and earnest men, by reason of their untiring energy and the application of their marvellous forces, made the movement prosper. Slowly, but surely, the tiny seed which had been sown broadcast over the land began to take root, and the wee little plants, with becoming modesty and pardonable pride, reared their heads erect among their fellows.

There was a General Quarterly Meeting of members held on New Year's Day, 1851. Though the shop had only been opened five days there was a keen desire to know how it was progressing. The assurances were satisfactory, and the meeting proceeded to deal with the ordinary business. First, there were all the officers to be elected. The first officials had only been appointed to establish a Store; now that that had been accomplished, and was about to be duly and legally registered, it was necessary to appoint the working officials. The following were elected:—President—William Booth; Secretary—Swainson Howarth; Treasurer—George Winterbottom; Trustees—William Marcroft, John Folson, and Thomas Mills; Directors—Joseph Wilde, Henry Robinshaw, John Patten, John Lees, Henry Cunliffe, and John Lowe; Auditors—Thomas Schofield and John Booth Lees; Shopmen: Superintendent—James Cheetham; Secretary—Samuel Schofield; No. 1—John Booth; No. 2—James Winterbottom; No. 3—Edward Barlow; No. 4—Joseph Bradbury; Arbitrators—John Heap, Kenneth Matthison, John Dronsfeld, John Nield, and John Schofield.

It was necessary for the Board when they commenced the grocery business to appeal for information to other Societies, but a perusal of the minutes reveals the alacrity with which they acquired the requisite knowledge and tact to conduct the Society's operations successfully. Soon it was deemed essential that the shop hours should be extended, and on January 28th, 1851, it was decided to open an extra night per week. An increase of 25 per cent in the necessary working hours of the shop was accepted as satisfactory evidence of solid progress. On the following day, January 29th, 1851, the Society was duly registered under the Friendly Societies Act.

Gradually the members increased, and, in proportion, the business grew. Again it was found necessary to extend the number of shop hours, and on the 25th of March, or three months only after commencing business, the Committee decided that the shop should be open for the sale of goods six nights per week, instead of four as previously. This was a sufficient answer to the croakings of the critics.

Then there was the first "divi." Ah! who can describe the feelings of justifiable pride that swelled the breasts of these honest men when they divided the first profits that had been made out of their Co-operative shopkeeping? Many people

contend that dividend is the controlling and sustaining power of modern Co-operation. This, however, could not be said of Co-operation in its infancy. The first dividend of the Oldham Industrial was 6d. in the pound. A modest sum, surely, but it conveyed tidings of great joy to the longing and anxious hearts of the members. The period of doubt and fear now gave place to one of hope and confidence. As the business was proved to be financially successful, it was thought that the officials should receive some additional remuneration for their services, and at the Quarterly Meeting, held April 9th, 1851, it was resolved by the members that the

Secretary be advanced from 15s. to £2 per quarter;

That the Treasurer be advanced from 15s. to £1 per quarter; and

That the Auditors be advanced from 6d. to 5s. each per quarter.

Committee-men, who had previously received nothing, to have 4d. for each attendance at Committee meetings.

Considering these munificent salaries it will be admitted that there was but very little room for professional Co-operators. Fourpence per week would not impart any revolutionising impetus to the man who had no love in his heart for the cause. With zeal, however, not subsistent on mercenary motives, the early Co-operators guarded and extended the infant institution. The question of carrying their business beyond the mere grocery trade was seriously considered, and on July 18th, 1851, it was determined that on two nights per week drapery goods should be offered for sale to the members. Shortly afterwards the Committee extended the system which they had previously adopted in the butchering trade, and which has been largely followed by other Societies since, of contracting with private tradesmen for work required by the Society. In the minutes of the Committee for August 27th, 1851, there appears this resolution: "That we engage Isaac Hall to make and mend shoes, and make and clog clogs, and that he be allowed 10 per cent profits."

All these simple records are valuable and interesting because they furnish evidence of growth and expansion. They are undying testimonies to the noble aspirations by which these men were actuated, and the assiduity and activity which characterised their actions in attempting to reach their lofty

ideal. Within the short space of nine months there was an extraordinary development of their trade, and in one small building there were two separate departments successfully carried on, viz., grocery and provisions and drapery; whilst there were carried on by commission butchering, boots, shoes, and clogs.

Another indication of prosperity was the increase in wages granted July 2nd, 1851. Shopmen, whose remuneration had been at the rate of three-halfpence per hour, were raised to threepence per hour, but new shopmen were only to be paid three-halfpence per hour for the first quarter. At the end of the year there was every reason to be proud of the Society's prosperity. The balance sheet showed—

	£	s.	d.
Share Capital	462	8	2
Cash received for Goods	1868	10	0
Interest paid on Shares	10	10	7
Amount paid in Dividend.....	120	11	8





CHAPTER VI.

Surmounting Difficulties.

Who are the great ?

They who have boldly ventured to explore
Unsounded seas and lands unknown before ;
Soared on the wings of science, wide and far,
Measured the sun, and weighed each distant star ;
Pierced the dark depths of ocean and of earth,
And brought uncounted wonders into birth ;
Repelled the pestilence—restrained the storm,
And given new beauty to the human form ;
Wakened the voice of reason, and unfurled
The page of truthful knowledge to the world ;
They who have toiled and studied for mankind,
Aroused each slumbering faculty of mind,
Taught us a thousand blessings to create—
These are the nobly great.

J. Critchley Prince.

THE history of the Society would not have been worth recording if there had been no dangers courageously faced and difficulties manfully surmounted. No journeys are interesting where the sea is placidly smooth, and where the progress by land is easy and monotonous. War excites no emotions when the battles are all one-sided. It is the moment of danger which gives life and tone to the episode, and lifts it above the region of common-place events.

“Many men owe the grandeur of their lives to their tremendous difficulties,” said Spurgeon, and the Co-operative movement to-day owes its prosperity, if not its continued existence, to the heritage of manliness, of self-sacrifice, and of nobility bequeathed to it by its unpretentious pioneers.



HENRY BARLOW.



JOHN BOOTH.

The success achieved in the first year of the Society's operations naturally gave rise to expectations of greater success in the immediate future. The near future, however, was doomed to be a trying time for the young and struggling institution. There were various causes for this. The spirit of opposition was strong in the town. People seen going to the Store were taunted and made the subject of ridicule by people in the vicinity. It requires more courage than some people imagine to calmly endure the jibes and the jeers and the boycottings of your neighbours. Then it was not to be expected that everybody would suddenly change the habits and customs of a lifetime to follow the lead of a few individuals whom most people regarded as fanatics. Even the prudent preferred to wait rather than risk their hard-earned wages in a venture which, it was generally predicted, would end in failure.

Some there were who objected to go to the Store because of the rough and inexperienced manners of the shopmen. They did not care to take home two or three pounds of butter or sugar or anything else that had the appearance of having been found in the street. Of course, this was to some extent inevitable, seeing that those who served in the shop were mill hands whose only opportunity to learn the art of making up a parcel was behind the counter in the evening.

Then there was a stronger element of opposition in those who found fault with the Sunday labours of the Committee and the facilities which they afforded for mental culture on that day. Many of the members of the various churches and chapels had to pass the Store on their way to service, and when they saw that even the sacredness of the Sabbath did not deter these Co-operators from actively pursuing the ideal which they had so much at heart they would shake their heads significantly and pronounce anything but a blessing upon their devoted labours.

There can be no doubt that this was a powerful instrument for retarding the progress of the new Co-operative movement. Then it was known that many of the prominent men of the Store were not connected with any place of worship, whilst others were associated with such unorthodox sects as the Barkerites or Unitarians.

But beyond these causes—which were, perhaps, not unexpected—there were others over which the people had no direct

control. In the year 1852 there was the great strike at the ironworks of Messrs. Platt Bros. and Co. This seriously lessened the resources of the workpeople, and led many of them to contract obligations with private shopkeepers which greatly interfered with their liberty of action in connection with any desire which they might have to join the Store. Much as some of them wished to break asunder the bonds which tied them to the private trader, the distress under which they suffered prevented them from taking a free and independent course.

These facts were judiciously seized by the Co-operative leaders, who made them an effective object lesson in favour of the movement, and the cardinal principle of Co-operation was shown to be ready money. No debts meant freedom; shop books meant slavery. It was also pointed out that Co-operation meant the abolition of strikes and lock-outs by virtue of the labourer becoming his own master.

The teachings of Owen, Kingsley, Maurice, &c., were frequently referred to, but the people generally were not acquainted with them. There were Co-operative Societies at Leeds, Rochdale, Heywood, and other places, but scepticism widely prevailed, and for some time the Industrial Society seemed to make no headway.

Then, as if all these obstacles were not sufficient to test the earnestness of these sturdy wayfarers, the country was plunged into the Crimean War in 1854. Few of the present generation know the full horrors of war. The war in South Africa had no injurious influence upon trade, but the effect of the Crimean War was to paralyse commerce in almost all its branches.

Under all these circumstances the wonder is not so much that the Store made no progress, but that it was able to survive the trials and troubles of that unsettled period.

In the light of these facts the following figures are more extraordinary than would at first sight appear.

The receipts for the first complete year ending September, 1852, were £2,836. 7s. 8d., and for the year ending September, 1855, they only amounted to £2,905. 14s. 4½d.

But stronger evidence of the depression then existing is to be found in the serious reductions of capital which the Society suffered. Whilst the trade did not go up the capital

went down. In September, 1851, it stood at £462. 8s. 2d., in 1852 at £457. 8s. 7d., in 1853 at £374. 9s. 7d., and in 1854 at £361. 5s. 2d.

Surely this hope deferred was sufficient to make the heart of the most enthusiastic Co-operator grow sick. But there was no despondency, no despair. It was felt that sooner or later the dark clouds must roll away, and if they were able to maintain their ground during such anxious and troublous times there need be no fears for the results when peace and prosperity shed their blessings around them.





CHAPTER VII.

Hope Revived.

What is our duty here ? To tend
From good to better, thence to best.

Bowring.

Nay ! never falter ; no great deed is done
By falterers who ask for certainty ;
No good is certain, but the steadfast mind,
The undivided will to seek the good.

George Eliot.

IT is said that the darkest hour is just before the dawn. The truth of this adage was never more exemplified than in the rapid transition from the unpromising position in which the Society stood, as narrated in the last chapter, to the period of unexampled prosperity and growth which suddenly enveloped it. Its promoters never faltered. With enduring patience and tireless energy they kept plodding on, confident, with Washington Irving, that "little minds are tamed and subdued by misfortunes, but great minds rise above them."

It was not, however, until the year 1856 that the Society began to manifest that wonderful propensity of growing by leaps and bounds. Differences of opinion have since taken place, dissensions have occurred, but the losses have been more than swallowed up by the gains.

In the meantime the Committee and the members were anxious to have a building of their own. They were dissatisfied with the premises which they occupied, and they complained



EDWARD BARLOW.



EDWARD CLEGG.

of what they considered to be a heavy rent. On the 20th December, 1854, Messrs. William Marcroft, Thomas Schofield, and Henry Hewkin were appointed a Committee to prepare a rule to submit to a General Meeting respecting building premises wherein to transact the business of the Society. Another Committee was selected to make inquiries and recommend a suitable plot of land on which to erect the proposed Store. Various spots within a given radius of Manchester Street were visited, with the result that two sites commanded a number of supporters. The plot which seemed to meet with most favour was situated in Grosvenor Street, off Rochdale Road. Its position was claimed to be good, whilst the price, 2d. per yard, was all that could be desired. The other available piece of land was in King Street. In point of situation it was admittedly preferable, but 6d. per yard was contended by many to be a fatal objection. The question was anxiously debated, and for a time it seemed as though the world-famed King Street Store was never to be. However, one or two of the courageous spirits urged the superior claims of the principal thoroughfare, and ultimately, with a slight twinge of conscience, the Committee, consisting of Messrs. William Marcroft, James Taylor, Henry Hewkin, John Anderson, and James Schofield, decided to recommend the King Street site. This was accepted by the members on June 6th, 1855, and the Committee were empowered "to erect the sort of building that they thought best."

It is unnecessary to go into the detail work of the Committee on this interesting point. It will be realised that, important as the work of opening a Store was, it was equally as important to build a Store. It tested their business capacity in a manner untried before. With a view to economy and efficiency they let the work in its various sections to different contractors, whilst in some departments they bought the material themselves and contracted for the labour. This entailed an enormous addition to the labours of the Committee, but they cheerfully bore the burden, and watched with feelings of pride and satisfaction the growth of the edifice which they could fondly call their own.

As the building approached completion it was felt that the event was worthy of some kind of public demonstration. "Let us have a tea party," said some of the members; and, as this

was and is the only possible and the most popular form of celebration amongst the working people, it was decided to have an opening tea party. Great preparations were made to ensure a successful gathering, for it was believed that the occasion would mark an important epoch in the social history of the town. Speakers were invited from Rochdale, a deputation was appointed to wait upon Mr. John Nield to ask him to preside, musicians were engaged, and the favourite Lancashire reciter was secured to give a pleasing variety to the proceedings. How far their efforts were successful may be judged from the following report, which appeared in the *Oldham Chronicle* of Saturday, October 27th, 1855:—

TEA PARTY OF THE OLDHAM CO-OPERATIVE ASSOCIATION.

In order to celebrate the opening of their new shop in King Street, the members of the above Association, along with their friends and others, held a tea party in the Bank Top Schoolroom on Saturday evening last. The company numbered about 250, and comprised a most respectable portion of our working classes. Tea and bread were served in abundance, and of first quality, being provided by the Co-operative Society, and, a programme having been arranged, Mr. JOHN NIELD was called to the chair. Previous to the commencement of the programme,

Mr. JAS. SCHOFIELD, President of the Society, addressing the meeting, stated that the objects for which the Association was founded were the frugal investment of the savings of the members, and the better enabling them to purchase food, clothing, or other necessities, or the tools, implements, or materials of their trade or calling, or to provide for the education of their children or kindred. The profits of the Society were then divided, interest at the rate of 5 per cent per annum was paid on all shares paid up previous to or at the commencement of any quarter, and the remaining profits divided in proportion to the amount purchased by each member.

The SECRETARY (Mr. John Booth) then gave an account of the Society's affairs, and congratulated the members on its very satisfactory nature. He stated that for the protection of the interests of the shareholders their stock was insured to the extent of £400, and a redemption fund was in existence of the value of £74 as a guarantee against any deficiency that might arise, and a security for the payment of the shares back in full to the members upon their withdrawal from the Association. The receipts were nearly £3,000 per year, or from £55 to £60 for every twelve hours the shop remained open; the amount which had been paid in wages since the commencement was £335. 14s. 11d.; interest amounting to £101. 14s. 7d. had been paid on shares; and the amount of dividend which had been granted on purchases was £717. 3s. 6d. Besides the

security which the members had of being served with goods of the best quality, the pecuniary benefits arising from Co-operation were of no small consideration ; and an instance was cited where an individual had joined the Association and lodged a shilling of entrance fee, but though no deposit had been given of the amount of his share he had received since the time of the entry a dividend of £5 upon it.

The CHAIRMAN next addressed the meeting, and gave instances of the success and extent which companies similar to theirs had attained.

The whole of the evening was spent in a most agreeable and harmonious manner. Duets were sung by Messrs. Moss and Hilton, who were repeatedly encored, and many choice recitations were given by Messrs. T. Sconcroft and W. Haigh, the rendering of the latter being in native dialect, eliciting frequent bursts of laughter from the audience ; while airs on the concertina diversified the entertainment, which concluded at a rather advanced hour, all seemingly highly delighted with the whole proceedings.

The Bank Top Schoolroom here referred to was at that time the meeting-room of the Christian Brethren, more commonly known as Barkerites, to whom allusion has already been made. The School, which is now the property of the Roman Catholics, has altered very little in appearance, but the whole of the surroundings have undergone a very remarkable change. The Roman Catholics have built a fine church adjoining the School, whilst in close proximity the Infirmary and School Board Offices afford examples of the town's progress in architecture at a later date.

The celebrated Bank Top Chimney, famed for miles around, was cleared away, but the Bank Top Foundry outlived it for a long time. That, too, however, was fated to go, and now the Co-operative Society owns a long line of buildings completely covering the southern side of Foundry Street from King Street to John Street, where the old Schoolroom still stands.

Who at that period could possibly imagine that in forty-five years' time such a fine block of property would be owned by the Co-operative Society whose first little investment in buildings they were celebrating that day? Try to picture the contrast. Now there is the magnificent drapery establishment, with its recent important addition, in King Street. There is the Co-operative Hall, which at all times has been the home of liberty and free thought. There, too, is the bakery, which has more than doubled its trade in a very short time ; there are the grocery stores, the slaughter-houses, the electric works, and the stables.

The stables alone bear remarkable testimony to the progress of the age. They are marvels of order and cleanliness.

The tea party is mentioned because it was the first of the series of annual tea parties with which the members are now so familiar, and because the speakers at that meeting gave a clear indication of what their high ideals were.

With what earnestness they laboured to establish that ideal and what results have been achieved it is the simple purpose of this Jubilee History to show.







CENTRAL FURNISHING, GENTS' OUTFITTING, AND TAILORING STORES.



CHAPTER VIII.

Property Owners.

Dosn't thou 'ear my 'erse's legs, as they canters awaay ?
Proputty, proputty, proputty—that's what I 'ears 'em say.
Proputty, proputty, proputty—Sam, thou's an ass for thy pains.
Theer's moor sense i' one o' 'is legs nor in all thy braains.

* * *

Proputty, proputty sticks, an' proputty, proputty graws.

Terapso.

IT is surprising what a sense of dignity property confers upon a man. No matter how forlorn and dejected he has been previously, the acquisition of a little proprietary right in bricks and mortar seems to give him an air of one who feels that at last he has got a footing in his native land. The account of the first Committee meeting held on their own premises is made conspicuous in the minute book by a very striking head line—"written large," as "Jo" would say in "Bleak House."—It says:—

AT THE FIRST MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD IN KING STREET STORE,
OCTOBER 30TH, 1855,

It was resolved:—

1st.—That the minutes of last meeting be confirmed.

2nd.—That our Secretary pay the rent to-morrow to Andrew Scheffeld, and give up the key belonging to the old shop in Manchester Street.

That was an important meeting. For one reason it gave the stamp of perpetuity to the words KING STREET STORE.

Who does not know King Street Store? Ask the little one where he is going that he is so cheerful and jolly, and he will tell you that he is going to an entertainment at the KING STREET STORE. Ask the little girl who is admiring her nice new frock and her pretty new hat where she got them, and she will tell you that her mother bought them with the "divi." at the KING STREET STORE. Ask the newly-married couple who it is that owns the very comfortable house in which they are living, and they will answer that they have bought it through the KING STREET STORE. Ask the old people who are tottering down the hill of life so serenely and so happy to what they owe their assurance of a comfortable and blissful old age, and they will tell you that they owe it to the lessons of thrift and economy learnt at the KING STREET STORE.

There are hundreds, possibly thousands, who do not know where the Registered Offices of the Oldham Industrial Co-operative Society Limited are situated, but everybody knows where the KING STREET STORE is. It is a household word. It is a household blessing.

The other reason why the meeting was important was because on that day they took a decisive step forward. They resolved to pay off the landlord and give up the key of the shop in Manchester Street. What a contrast between taking the shop and giving it up. Then they had forebodings as to their ability to pay the £30 rent; now they could not only pay off the landlord, but they had built a Store of their own.

It would be superfluous to tell many of the members where the first King Street Store was. It was an unpretentious structure, very narrow, but a good distance from back to front. People who were disposed to be unfriendly said "it favvert a ginnel." As you entered the shop a short counter stood on your right, and out beyond, in the darkness, as it were, were the flour and meal bins. The writer used to fetch more meal than flour, because it was used for porridge, and porridge was the principal food of the family. It served for breakfast and "baggin." "Baggins" have since gone out of fashion people take "tea." White bread was a luxury. "Grun-deawn" a species of coarse brown bread was the only available bread for the poor folks.

Up a narrow staircase you reached a room which did duty in several ways. Part of it was used as a flour chamber;

another part was told off as a Boardroom. At a little later period it also served as a lending library, and a third part was used as a meeting-room and newsroom. It was hardly equal to one of the smallest branch newsrooms of to-day, but at that time it was a boon and a privilege to be able to attend a room of your own where, by Co-operation, you could have access to newspapers and periodicals which were utterly beyond the reach of the working classes, and which were almost too far away for the middle classes. Looking back to that dark but hopeful time it would not be difficult to establish a connecting link between the Society's present proud possessions and the persistent and manly efforts put forth by the early Co-operators "who toiled and studied for mankind."

That these efforts were not without their influence is emphasised by the remarkable growth which now seemed to characterise the Society's operations.

The days of doubt had been passed, and a period of security had set in. This is strikingly illustrated by the annual returns of the Society. Up to the year 1855 there seemed to be wanting that confidence which was so essential to success. The total receipts only amounted to £2,905. 14s. 4½d., and the share capital to £503. 5s. 11½d. No sooner, however, was it clearly demonstrated that not only were those people who had the making of Co-operation in hand determined to succeed but were already succeeding, than that support which was withheld in the days of adversity began to buoy them up in their hours of prosperity. The receipts had risen at the end of the year 1856 to £5,164. 7s. 6d., and the share capital to £772. 7s. 6d.

This remarkable progress, however, could not be made without prompting some further advance and encouraging some new idea. The next important problem which pressed for solution was whether the Store should be open in the day time. Every day it was becoming more and more manifest that it was impossible to deal satisfactorily with the great increase of business and only have the shop open at night. At the same time the members could not shut their eyes to the fact that if they opened in the day time their working expenses must inevitably be largely increased. This induced several, whose zeal for the cause could not be questioned, to oppose what they believed would be a precipitate and ill-advised venture. They believed in the old motto "Hasten slowly," and they expressed

their fear that inconsiderate actions might end in decay and disaster. Others recognised in this wonderful evidence of the growth of Co-operation a brighter and more hopeful prospect for the future, and they were anxious to help on and welcome the good time that was coming. The debates were often long and earnest, and sometimes they were short and sharp. As a result, the members were divided into hostile sections. The Committee were not more unanimous than were the members.

After considerable discussion, it was agreed that the vexed question should be settled by a ballot of the members. This was done at a General Meeting held on May 14th, 1856, when, by a small majority, it was decided to open the shop on week days at eight o'clock every morning except Tuesday, when it was to open at four o'clock in the afternoon, in order to give the shopman time to go to market, &c. It was also resolved to close at eight o'clock at night except on Fridays and Saturdays, when the shop must remain open until ten o'clock. As compensation for the additional labour rendered necessary by this arrangement, the Secretary's salary was advanced to £2. 10s. and the Auditors' to 8s. per quarter, whilst the Directors were to be paid at the rate of 6d. per night.

The successful combatants, however, were not content with the victories they had achieved and the honours they had won. Like Alexander the Great, they longed for fresh worlds to conquer. At a Special Meeting, held November 5th, 1856, it was resolved to appoint a Committee of seven members whose duties were to consider and "adopt means to extend the business of the Society." The Committee which was called the "Progressive Committee" - was composed of the following members: - Wm. Booth Lees, Joseph Schofield, James Lees, James Jackson, James Heywood, James Hall, and James Johnson. These gentlemen were not slow in getting to work, and as a result several important changes were effected. On December 3rd it was decided to adopt the check system in lieu of the paper list then in vogue, and on December 10th the Committee ordered 3,000 copper or £1 checks, 10,000 shilling checks, and 15,000 pence checks. The £1 and shilling checks were to be 1in. diameter, and the pence check $\frac{7}{8}$ ths of an inch diameter. Many members will, no doubt, have a very vivid recollection of these Co-operative tokens of that period. On January 12th, 1857, the Progressive Committee resolved to

recommend the payment of a dividend to non-members, and three days later the policy was accepted by a General Meeting of members. This is a question about which there was, and still is, much difference of opinion, but the soundness of the principle has been demonstrated by the fact that the dividend so paid grew from 8d. in the pound in 1857 to the same amount as that paid to members, less 2d. in the pound, whilst at the present time either members or non-members may receive 2s. 6d. in the pound dividend for their checks any time during the quarter.





CHAPTER IX.

Forging Ahead.

You'll carry the flag — the old torn rag
You'll carry the flag to the fore,
Through the press and the strain and the deadly rain,
Where the fathers passed before.
And you'll stand by the flag when the faint hearts fly,
And the best that you have you'll give;
For the men who have learnt for a cause to die
Are the men who learn to live.

Auberon Herbert.

THE success achieved, as recorded in the last chapter, only acted as a stimulus to greater exertions. The appointment of a Special Committee to be designated the "Progressive Committee" indicated the determination of these zealous workers. It was felt that the attention of the Board of Management should be concentrated upon the business of the shop, and that the consideration of new schemes should be delegated to a separate body. This new Committee not only initiated and established the tin check system and secured the adoption of the principle of payment of dividend to non-members, but they passed a resolution on January 12th, 1857: "That we recommend the propriety of commencing the cotton trade."

This was a singular decision, seeing that the cotton industry had already made great strides in the town. But it was not a matter of how the resolutions were worded with these men; it was what they meant to do. At their next meeting, January 19th, they supplemented their expressed intention by adding: "That we recommend to the General Meeting the propriety

of placarding the town respecting taking up shares for the Manufacturing Society. Likewise the *Oldham Chronicle*."

Their vision was not compassed by the four walls of a grocer's shop. They meant to put into practical shape the policy of the Rochdale Pioneers, "to regulate the means of production as well as distribution." The General Meeting adopted their recommendation, and thus established that connection with the famous Sun Mill which has not yet been broken. The spirit of confidence appeared now to have taken firm root. The fact that 8d. in the pound could be paid in dividend to non-members shows that the business was now considered to be so sufficiently staid as to guarantee a higher sum than this being regularly paid to members. Not only was the utmost security felt upon this point, but in the opinion of many the large increase of business necessitated the opening of another shop. This, it was thought by some of the more cautious members, would be a leap in the dark. "Let us," they said, "place our present shop in a position beyond the possibility of failure before we enlarge our liability and responsibility by the opening of a Branch Store." This view seemed to be generally acceptable, for when a recommendation to open a Branch Store at Werneth was laid before a General Meeting, held March 11th, 1857, it was rejected until such times as the King Street premises were complete. The advocates of progress, however, were not content to sit complacently under defeat. By the gentle art of persuasion and the influence of declamatory oratory they succeeded in a remarkably short space of time in bringing a majority of the members to their way of thinking. Though the project lost favour in March, it was again brought forward in the following month, when it was resolved at a General Meeting, held on April 8th, 1857, "That we open a Branch Store at Werneth."

Truly were these men full of zeal and full of enterprise. It will be admitted that not only did they achieve success, but that they deserved it. The history of civilisation shows few movements where the pioneers have displayed such consistent and characteristic determination, perseverance, and self-sacrifice as were manifest in the attitude and the actions of the early Co-operators. The professional Co-operator and the dividend hunter appear at a later date. They attach themselves, like the parasite on the great oak tree, when they feel

that the institution has grown sufficiently strong to support both themselves and it. The men who laid the foundation of our Stores had no thought of honour or reward. To them it was a work of principle and a labour of love. There was a neatness and a promptitude about their actions which shows an utter absence of that common practice of trimming their sails to catch the passing breeze.

It has already been noticed how short were the intervals that elapsed between arriving at a decision and the actual commencement of work. The opening of the Werneth Branch Store establishes a worthy record for earnestness and despatch. As previously stated, the members decided on April 8th, 1857, to open a branch at Werneth. Within the course of a week the Committee had made such progress in the selection of a suitable building that they were in a position to open it for business, and on April 15th, 1857, the Committee resolved "That the new Werneth Store be opened each week night for the present." This, however, was held to be insufficient, and a Special General Meeting of the members was held on the 28th of the same month, when the Committee were authorised to open the branch shop in the day time. The times of opening were to be as follows: One o'clock in the afternoon on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays; and eight o'clock in the morning on Thursdays and Saturdays. The shop is now numbered 52, Manchester Road.

The progressive spirit could not, however, be appeased, and the Alexandrian thirst could not be quenched. With that natural pride which is born of success, the members could not rest satisfied as tenants in another man's house. They began to find themselves talking about building another shop of their own. The feeling became contagious, and by the 20th of July, 1857, the opinion had sufficiently developed itself as to warrant a Special Meeting of members, at which a resolution was carried, "That we build a Store in the neighbourhood of Werneth." This, considering the short time they had been in the district, looked like business. Another resolution declared "That we build on a turnpike road if possible." The following gentlemen were elected a Building Committee to report: Messrs. W. Booth, James Johnson, Daniel Wolstencroft, E. Barlow, Fredk. Moss, and John Anderson. The meeting was adjourned for a week to enable this Committee to make

inquiries, and so satisfactory was their report that on July 27th, 1857, it was resolved: "That we purchase the plot of land in Werneth belonging to James Wolfenden," and "That the Board erect a building forthwith." Six shares were taken up in the Oldham Benefit Building Society in order to obtain the necessary capital. The building was completed, and the stock was removed from the old to the new premises on Christmas Day, December 25th, 1857, and the shop commenced business the day following. This rate of progress under such exceptional circumstances will bear favourable comparison with anything that is done in these more advanced days, when everything is supposed to be accomplished with electric rapidity.

The formal opening of the new Werneth Branch Store was fixed for New Year's Day. It was a happy coincidence. The opening was to be further signalised by the holding of a tea party in the new shop. This was the inauguration of a popular custom which still prevails. Everybody who has been to the opening tea party of a new branch knows what enjoyable occasions they are. A good feed, good humour, good fellowship, and good prospects are the pervading characteristics.

On New Year's morning the members of the Board and the Progressive Committee might have been seen hurrying forward the preparations, each doing his share of the work without any scruples as to its dignity or otherwise. The President was in the upper room, with his coat off and shirt sleeves rolled up, bent down on his knees mopping the floor! In the evening he presided over a merry gathering in the same room, and felt none the less honoured or honourable because of his morning's occupation.

Who shall say that these men were sordid, selfish money-grabbers? Would they not enjoy themselves all the more from the fact of having worked to prepare for the pleasure of others? One half the possible pleasures of life are lost because people stand by and expect others to contribute to their enjoyment. One half of the unhappiness of the world is caused by the habit of people waiting for other people to make them happy.

This was not the way with the early Co-operators. Where work was required to be done they were there ready to do it. If it were a case requiring numbers, the members were there

to assist. The Committee always seemed to be in evidence, and the President was not too dignified to mop the floor!

The example and influence of such leaders was bound to have an inspiring and exhilarating effect upon those with whom they came in contact. Energy and enthusiasm are contagious. It is remarkable how far Co-operators are guided to-day in all that is best and soundest in the movement by the precept and example of the early pioneers. The reason is not far to seek—they were actuated by a pure regard for principle, and not for place. Men change places, but principles live on for ever.

In the meantime, whilst these matters of detail were largely occupying the minds of some of the more active members, others noticed with pride and satisfaction the extraordinary rate of progress which the Society was making. The rejoicings of the members were sincere when it was found from the returns for the year ending September, 1857, that the receipts were more than double those of 1856. This was an achievement of which they might justly feel proud. It established a record which has never since been reached. The figures are worthy of reproduction:—

	1856.			...	1857.			...	Increase.		
	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Share Capital	772	7	6	...	1390	14	3½	...	618	6	8½
Receipts for Goods ...	5164	7	6	...	10752	12	2	...	5588	4	8
Interest on Shares ...	34	6	0	...	53	14	9	...	19	8	9
Paid in Dividend	237	1	8½	...	643	1	5	...	405	19	8½



Jonathan Beaumont. Richard Thompson. Noah Ashworth.



James H. Fletcher. Robt. P. Bradbury. James Brearley.

AUDITORS.



CHAPTER X.

1858.

Each man is some man's servant : every soul
Is by some other's presence quite discrowned :
Each owes the next through all the imperfect round,
Yet not with mutual help ; each man is his own goal,
And the whole earth must stop to pay his toll.

Lowell.

THE year 1858 deserves a chapter to itself. It was a remarkable year—an epoch-making year. It stands out in bold relief on account of the momentous decisions taken—decisions which were not only of vital importance to the Society at that moment, but decisions which were likely to affect the policy of the Society for all time. What is being done to-day is mainly a development of the schemes conceived and courageously propounded by the men of that period. The Marcrofts, the Booths, the Hewkins, the Lords, the Schofield's, and a host of others will ever be conspicuous figures in the history of the Society as its creators and builders. Mistakes they may have made; all great men make mistakes, but a great man will never make the same mistake twice. Mistakes do not make great men, but great men will acknowledge and rectify, if possible, at all costs, their mistakes. The men who hesitate for fear of mistakes make no progress. They move in a circle and end where they began. They who laid the foundations of the Co-operative movement and erected its bulwarks had no fears of this description. To think, with them, was to act. Neither did they fear the criticism and

ridicule of a mocking crowd. They fully realised the truth of the old saying that "There is never wanting a dog to bark at you."

Let any man show the world that he feels
Afraid of its bark, and 'twill fly at his heels;
Let him fearlessly face it, 'twill leave him alone,
And 'twill fawn at his feet if he fling it a bone.

The truth of this old adage has been amply illustrated by the progress of the movement in Oldham. The men who were thought to be cranks have proved to be seers. Their memory is honoured in their native town, whilst for monuments their children and children's children may point not only to the great hives of industry which the Limited Liability movement has erected, and which owes its origin and vitality to Co-operation, but to the happy and prosperous condition of the people, which is largely owing to the blessings which Co-operation has spread around.

Their highest and most enduring testimonial is the success of their principles and in their adoption by the people. In the parliamentary borough of Oldham there are 29,253 registered voters. Within the same area there are 30,917 registered Co-operators.

As a further illustration of the power and influence of Co-operation locally, it may be of interest to show that on the public representative bodies the presence of Co-operators is of no insignificant character. This is all the more gratifying because the members of these bodies are not selected because of their adhesion to Co-operative views or otherwise, but generally because, as representatives of one of the political parties, they are considered suitable men to take part in the government of the town. In considering the number of Co-operators who are public representatives it should also be borne in mind that private shopkeepers have some little advantage, because they are selected not only on account of their business capabilities, but also because they are able so to regulate their times of service in each capacity as to be the less injurious to the other. Still, in Oldham,

Out of 48 Aldermen and Councillors,	23 are Co-operators.
Out of 22 Poor Law Guardians,	12 are Co-operators.
Out of 56 District Councillors,	37 are Co-operators.
Out of 33 Members of School Boards,	21 are Co-operators.

From the harvest reaped, therefore, it may be assumed that the seed was not only good seed, but that it was sown in good ground and brought forth fruit abundantly.

The distinctive features of 1858 were many and important. Amongst them may be mentioned the decision to have what they called a permanent Secretary—that is, a Secretary who should devote his whole time to the office. During the year they also decided to appoint a Manager upon similar conditions. This year also saw the commencement of the butchering business and the boot and shoe trade on their own premises. A desire sprang up to express in some form or other the gratitude of the Co-operators to the town in which they had prospered, and it was resolved to present to the town a drinking fountain. All these were important and worthy objects, but perhaps the most noteworthy step taken during the year was that leading to the establishment of the present educational system.

On the 13th of January, 1858, Mr. Schofield retired from the office of President, and Mr. James Lord was elected to fill the position for twelve months. Who was the leading or moving spirit during this period is not very clear. Perhaps there was more than one. But, generally, the policy of an institution, like that of a nation, is largely influenced and directed by the presiding hand. Taking this view, great honour is due to Mr. James Lord. The story of 1858, under his presidency, is the most extraordinary of any in the history of the Society. The growth of capital and trade, as will be seen by the following figures, was of a most encouraging description:—

	1857.				1858.				Increase.			
	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.	
Share Capital	1390	14	2½	...	3113	10	1½	...	1722	15	11	
Sales	10752	12	2	...	19043	16	1½	...	8291	3	11½	
Dividend	643	1	5	...	1416	11	4	...	773	9	11	
Interest on Capital	53	14	9	...	122	9	11	...	68	15	2	

But it is not the trade results alone upon which the reputation of the year 1858 depends. Its main characteristic was the solidifying of the foundations and the strengthening of the bulwarks. How well this work was done may be best judged by the enormous strength of the Society at the present day. It has had many vicissitudes, it has passed through its periods

of adversity and prosperity; it has participated in the comforts flowing from commercial progress, and it has suffered from waves of national depression. But the Society stands to-day one of the healthiest and most successful in the movement. Truly might it be said of it: "The rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock." Whether that rock shall ever be rent asunder by the blasting operations of strife and jealousy is a problem that must always be left with the members for the time being to solve. With the noble and confiding principles of the founders of Co-operation before them, with the adoption of their ideal and enduring motto "Principles, not men; the Society, not offices," the rain may descend, and the winds may blow, but the institution will go on for ever.

It has already been stated that a permanent Secretary and a permanent Manager were appointed this year. For some time the creation of these offices had been regarded by some of the members as inevitable. Yet when the time came there was much serious deliberation and calculation of the cost. Their significance and possible effect could not be overlooked. They meant a permanent addition to the working expenses, and this is a point in all business undertakings that requires to be carefully watched. At all times it must be fully realised that the offices exist for the benefit of the Society and not the Society for the benefit of the offices. This was duly considered and the necessity for the office clearly shown to the members, who resolved on January 20th, 1858, "That we have a permanent Secretary. Salary 16s. per week."

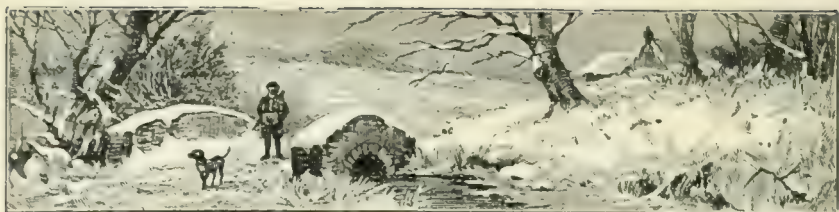
On October 20th it was further resolved to appoint a permanent Manager at a salary of 30s. per week. Not very princely salaries some readers will, no doubt, be inclined to remark. Such sums are not now designated salaries. There is a sort of unwritten law which draws the line of demarcation between salaries and wages. Sixteen shillings per week would now be considered a very poor wage. The application of the word "salary" would never occur to the most poetic fancy. This, however, is one of those little landmarks by the way side by which it is possible to measure, in some degree, the wonderful progress that has been made since Co-operation began.

In resolving to engage a Manager the Committee realised the fact that they were delegating to one person the duties and the responsibilities that had previously been borne by a number of them. They knew that the step was a vital one. None felt more than they that the weal or the woe of the Society depended entirely upon the selection of the man to fill the office which they had created. It was a General Meeting of members. All officers and all privates—in fact, all servants of whatever character—were then elected by the members. Even boys to assist in the shops were elected at a General Meeting.

On January 27th, 1858, William Booth was selected to fill the position of Secretary, and Thomas Schofield was appointed Manager in October, 1858. It was a graceful and worthy act to elect William Booth as Secretary, because, though labouring under great physical disabilities, he had served the Society faithfully and well. He suffered from a paralytic stroke when only two years of age, which necessitated the use of arm crutches during the rest of his active life. Yet he learnt the trade of hatting, and during the early career of the Store he devoted all his spare time to the furtherance of its interests. He was the first President, and afterwards served as shopman and shop secretary.

In Thos. Schofield it was felt that an admirable selection had been made. He was a zealous Churchman, and of exemplary character. He inspired great confidence in the stability of the Society. He did his duty courageously and honestly, without fear or favour.

It is worthy of note here that the Society has been fortunate in its choice of principal servants. Whilst many Societies have experienced disastrous results and Co-operation has received many checks through the incompetency or dishonesty of permanent officials, the Oldham Industrial Society seems to have had the happy knack of putting the right men in the right places. It will be admitted that this has had an important bearing on the character and progress of the Society.



CHAPTER XI.

Incidents, Humorous and Otherwise.

It's hard to tell which gate to go
I' sich a world as this ;
An' do the best that one can do,
It sometimes runs amiss.

Waugh.

WHILST it was a matter of pride with most of the worthy old leaders to relate some of the particulars of the Society's wonderful growth it was also a source of delight to coax them into telling a few of their humorous experiences, of which there had, no doubt, been many. It could not be expected that a number of hatters, weavers, spinners, mechanics, &c., could enter upon a new business without committing themselves, occasionally, in such a way as to cause considerable merriment amongst their fellows. No one need be surprised, either, to notice allusions to cases where it was found that certain members were using the Store for purposes other than the benefit of Co-operation. But, as a rule, the Committee or the members acted with promptitude and good judgment. Take the following circumstances as an example.

It was discovered that a little under-current was at work which, if not stopped, threatened to undermine and bring ruin and desolation to the whole fabric. It could not reasonably be expected that an institution which was viewed by the private traders of the town as a serious if not a disastrous innovation should be left unmolested and free from the intrigues and machinations of its enemies; and so it came about that they

determined that if they could not injure it from without they would make it serve their purpose from within. This, it was thought, could be best accomplished by assuming sympathy with the Co-operative movement, and by this means gently but resolutely pushing their way until they reached the governing bodies themselves. Thus they could utilise the information acquired for their own benefit until such times as they were in a position to control the movement and direct its course to suit their own ends. Happily they were foiled in their fell purpose. The cloven hoof was discernible, and, after a very animated discussion and the expenditure of much angry feeling, it was resolved at a General Meeting held on March 31st, 1858, "That no member shall be eligible for any office who is carrying on the same trade or business as is carried on by the Society." The principle of this resolution has ever since been embodied in the rules of the Society, and it has proved a tower of strength in resisting the attacks of the would-be invaders.

Then there was the inevitable pleader who wanted a favour, and who would stoop to any artifice to get it. Here is an extract from a letter from Mr. William Booth:—

Their efforts in the butchering business came once very near a serious termination. The butcher had got in a large stock of meat for the week end's trade, and left the shop as usual on the Friday night. On Saturday morning, to the surprise of those about, the shop did not open. What could be the matter? Bystanders laughed and jeered. Women were there with baskets and check handkerchiefs to carry home their meat. But the meat was locked up. Hurried consultations were held. Committee-men were hastily summoned from their usual occupations, and for a time a very grave crisis prevailed. At length the problem was solved by the Committee forcing an entrance, and then cutting and selling the meat in their own primitive way as best they could.

Another circumstance I will give you to show you how shopmen are tried sometimes. It occurred at Werneth Store. One of the Committee went to Samuel Yardley, the shopman, and wanted him to let him have a sack of Tonge's Blue Flour. He would fetch it away at about a quarter past eight on the Monday night, and no one would be the wiser. At that time a resolution had been passed that all flour must come down and be weighed from the bins, so that the shopman could not tell what to do. Thomas Schofield being a strict Churchman, he did not go to him, so he came to me on the Sunday night, and asked what I thought he ought to do. I said, "Let him have it. Fill a sack out of the bins, and stick a blue ticket on it." He did so, and the next night, when the Committee-man came to the meeting, he said he wondered how long we should be so stupid about our system of selling flour. He knew a

man who had bought a sack of Tonge's Blue, and it was such flour that if you got a handful of it and threw it against a wall it would stick like a "snowbo'." He kept reaping this up week after week. I sat with the Committee then as Secretary, so you will see my position, but I was very quiet about it. Samuel Yardley told his father what he had done, but he did not tell him the name of the party, so at one of these times, when the Committee-man was praising Tonge's Blue, Thomas Yardley told us what his son Samuel had done. You should have seen the change that came over him. He never spoke, but the night following he went to Samuel to have the flour back, as it was really bad. He said that it had only been topped with Tonge's Blue. Samuel told him that he dared not take it back, but advised him to see Thomas Schofield about it. He said he would not, but would take it to the Committee. He did so, and you may be sure how I was fixed. He declared that if they would not exchange it he would take it to a General Meeting. I then told him all, said that if he named a General Meeting again I would take it and show them how he was trying to make the servants dishonest, but he gave it up, and the subject died away.

Numerous incidents of the troubles of shopmen might be given, but matters of this description are not peculiar to any one stage of the Society's history. One or two, however, from the recollections of Mr. Booth are of an amusing character. Here is an incident connected with the selling of treacle. The syrup was kept in a can with a long spout, and in frosty weather they experienced the greatest difficulty in getting it out to supply their customers. Frequent visits to the fire had to be made to induce the treacle to run out. One Saturday, when there had been a very hard frost, a woman went to the shop for three pounds of treacle. The shopman ran with the can to the fire, and after warming it for some time returned with it to the counter. But the treacle would not run. He went again, but with the same result. A third time he went, and this time he held it over the fire a little longer than on the previous occasions, then rushing back with it he held it over the woman's can, which he had placed on the scales. Success seemed to reward his efforts. The treacle slowly forced its way out, and then stopped. To quote Mr. Booth:—"A large lump rose on the end of the spout, and then he could not get it to run any further, so he shouted to his customer, 'D—— it, Missis, get howd of a hondful, an' then t'other will follow.' But she only laughed at him, and he had to take it to the fire again."

Butter was found to be rather a delicate matter to deal with. The Committee tried the plan, now often recommended,

of having different qualities on the counter. Mr. Booth says that they had two tubs, one to be sold at tenpence per pound, and the other at ninepence. The one at ninepence, however, was so scraped with tasting that it looked as if a lot of hens had been at it. It was taken off the counter, dressed, cut in two, and brought back, one-half of it marked tenpence, and the other half marked ninepence per pound. That which was marked tenpence was sold out directly, whilst no one would look at that bearing the ninepenny ticket, so it was again taken away, and reappeared as tenpenny butter, when it found as ready a sale as the other.

At a recent examination of children in the principles of Co-operation one of the pupils said that one advantage of being a Co-operator was that you could go to the shop and grumble if things did not suit you. The following illustrates a peculiar kind of grumbling.

One day a man entered the Store and expressed his desire to invest £20. The Secretary informed him that he could not do so, inasmuch as he was not a member. The Manager, Mr. Thomas Schofield, was appealed to, and he consented to receive the investment provided the man would pay his entrance fee of one shilling. This was done, the £20 was deposited, and the man went into the shop and made some large purchases. Amongst other articles he bought 1lb. of tea and 1lb. of coffee. On the following morning he appeared unexpectedly, returning his books, the 1lb. of coffee, and all the other articles which he had purchased. He demanded his money back, and declared that that sort of stuff would not suit him. He had never tasted anything worse in his life than the coffee. The Manager received him very respectfully, expressed regret at the occurrence, and promised to investigate the matter at once. This he did by ordering the kettle to be put on the fire, and then making a bowl of coffee from the returned and rejected article. So rich and palatable was the coffee, and so acceptable to all who tasted it, including the complainant himself, that he at once apologised for his language, and took all his purchases home again. Here he discovered that his son had inadvertently left a piece of gutta-percha in the kettle in which the coffee had been boiled, and hence the disagreeable taste and the hasty condemnation of the Store coffee. On learning this the man at once went

back and honestly related the whole circumstances to the Manager. That the propensity for grumbling almost passed the limit of endurance is evident from the following resolution which the Committee adopted on November 24th, 1859:— “That our Manager be informed to instruct our principal shopmen to inform those parties that continue to grumble that if they can purchase better and cheaper at other shops they are at liberty to go.”

Through cloud and through sunshine the Board pursued an unvarying course of rectitude and vigilance. Having been trained in the school of adversity, they naturally rebelled against extravagance of any description. Indifference they dealt with vigorously. If a member of the Board absented himself without sending a full written explanation he was mulct in a fine that amounted to more than his salary. The same spirit of seriousness characterised all their proceedings. No matter how small the amount might be that it was proposed to spend upon anything, it was duly and seriously considered by the Board as if the fate of empires depended upon it. No matter how insignificant the question, it was discussed with all the solemnity of a case of life and death. For instance, it was resolved, after a very careful examination of the requirements of the Society, “That a new degging-can be purchased for King Street Store, and that the old degging-can go to Werneth Store.” On another occasion the Board decided “That the stocktakers have any refreshment they require by paying for it themselves.” There could be no question about the economical management of these people, and yet they were not without their opponents and critics. When they decided to purchase half a dozen chairs, including one two-armed chair, for the use of the Board, and one table-cloth for the table in the Boardroom, there were those who thought that the Committee were getting too autocratic and extravagant. It was not often, however, that this charge could be laid against them. Numerous illustrations might be given of the vigilance and close supervision exercised by these men, but a few only will suffice to give an indication of their character.

On one occasion the duty of electing a man to the position of shoemaker to the Society was relegated to the Board. Advertisements were issued and many applications were

received; amongst them were two from Milnrow. It was deemed necessary to know the capabilities and character of these two men, and the most effectual method that suggested itself was that somebody should go to Milnrow and make the requisite inquiries. A deputation was thereupon appointed to visit Milnrow, and the munificent sum of one shilling and sixpence was allowed for expenses. It is satisfactory to know that one of the two Milnrow candidates, Mr. William Howarth, secured the situation at a salary of twenty-two shillings per week. That due regard was paid to the safety of the property is evident from the following resolution, passed by the Committee on August 15th, 1859:—"That the Manager purchase a bull's-eye lamp for the man that looks after the shops being properly closed at night." But perhaps the climax of prudence was reached when the Manager was instructed to ascertain from the butcher if he would be willing to reside in the chamber over the butcher's shop until such times as they should be able to see whether the shop would pay its way or not. Whether the butcher acceded to their wishes or not is not recorded, but that he was not fully satisfied with the position may be reasonably supposed from a minute passed by the Board:—"That the butcher have the privilege of killing pigs for anyone that will engage him."





CHAPTER XII.

The Butchering Department.

We may live without poetry, music, and art ;
We may live without conscience, and live without heart ;
We may live without friends ; we may live without books ;
But civilised man cannot live without cooks.
He may live without books, — what is knowledge but grieving ?
He may live without hope, — what is hope but deceiving ?
He may live without love, — what is passion but pining ?
But where is the man that can live without dining ?

Owen Meredith.

CO-OPERATORS are often taunted by their opponents with their disinclination to take up other enterprises. This hesitancy is pointed out as a weakness of Co-operation. If it be a weakness, let it be said by way of palliation that at least it is a commendable weakness, if it can be said that such a weakness exists. A man who has the custody, along with the power of investing, other people's money — much of it, probably, the hard earnings of poor men and women — would be less than a man if he did not take the greatest pains to acquire all necessary information and use the utmost caution before risking one penny of it. This may seem sentiment rather than business, but true Co-operators will be found to be more careful, if possible, with other people's money than they are with their own. This explains to some extent the apparent apathy with respect to the entrance into new channels of trade.

Following the appointment of Secretary, the question, which had often been mentioned, of extending the usefulness and scope of the Society began to be again seriously entertained. Several members advocated the establishment of departments



CENTRAL BUTCHERING, BOOT AND SHOE, AND GROCERY STORES.

for butchering and boot and shoe making. The proposal was sanctioned at a General Meeting on February 10th, 1858. The butchering department commenced on March 3rd, and the boot and shoe department on March 24th, 1858. It is somewhat singular that, in connection with Co-operation, these two departments have never achieved that success which has fallen to the lot of the grocery trade. This is especially noticeable in the butchering business. The profits are invariably below the average dividend which is paid, whilst in some Societies a separate dividend is paid on this class of goods. At the same time, the business, from a private standpoint, seems to be as successful and as profitable as the grocery trade. Perhaps the evolutions of the future will unfold the secret, and remove the difficulties which seem to envelop this particular branch.

It is not often, however, that Co-operators, having put their hands to the plough, think of turning back. There is one little exception, though, in connection with the Industrial Society's Butchering Department. The sales at Yorkshire Street Branch were so unsatisfactory that the butcher's shop was closed from the beginning of 1894 to the year 1896. Even now many Societies are finding it a serious tax upon the profits of the Grocery Department to pay the usual dividend upon meat purchases. It might possibly be thought that Co-operators were inclined to vegetarianism were it not for the fact that they disclose such a liking for roast beef, &c., at Co-operative tea parties. So far the Industrial Society has not seriously suffered in this branch of trade, and it is to be hoped that others may soon find a satisfactory solution of this very difficult problem.

As already stated, the butchering business started on March 3rd, 1858. The King Street shop was extended to cover the back yard on the recommendation of the Progressive Committee, and the purveyors of meat occupied the front part of the building in King Street. At the end of the year the business done was considered sufficiently encouraging to warrant an extension of the department. At that time the Victoria Market was the property of a private company, and the butchers used to occupy stalls for the sale of meat in the Old Market Place. Many of the members of the Store thought that the best place for doing well in the butchering trade was

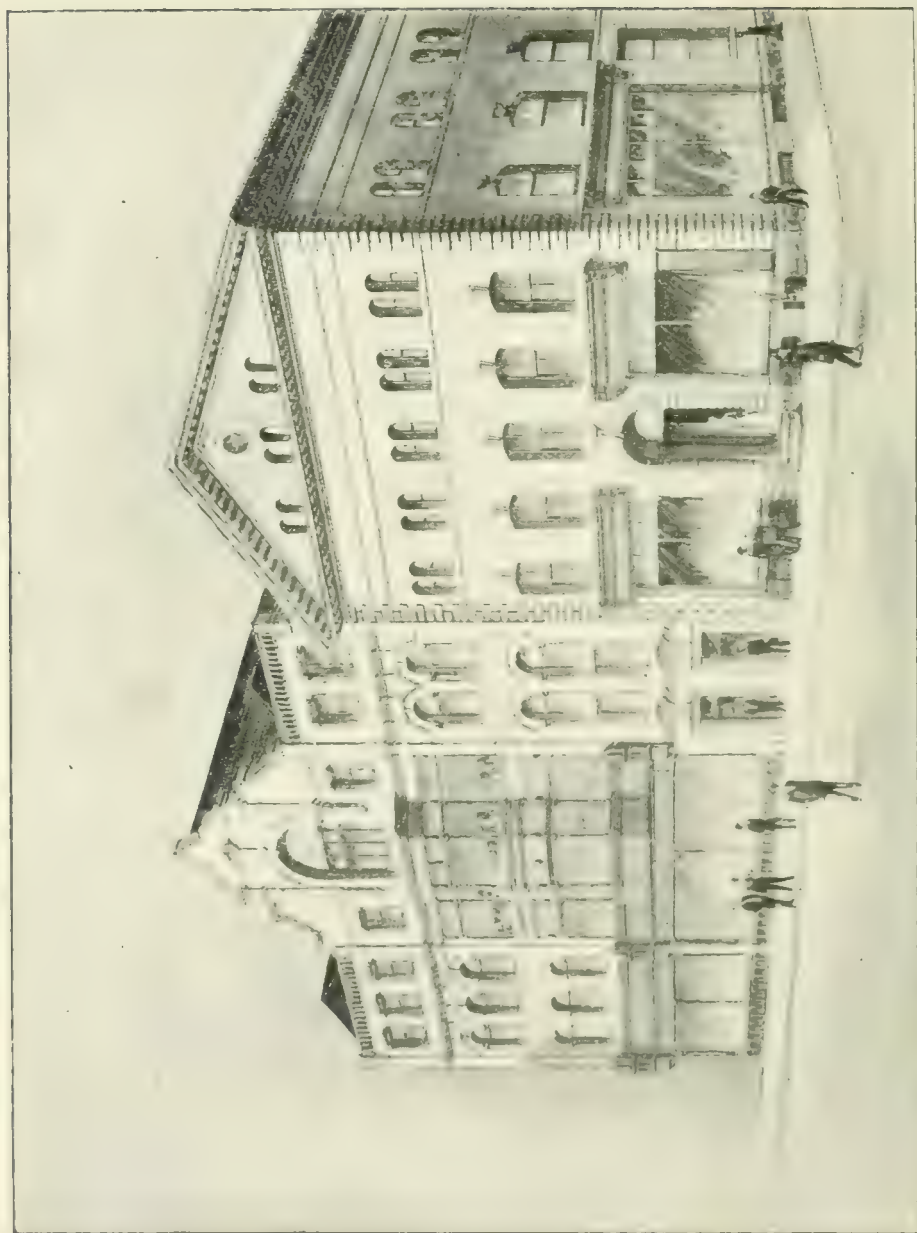
where men did mostly congregate, and they advocated a Co-operative Butchers' Stall in the Old Market Place. A resolution sanctioning such a scheme was adopted by a Quarterly Meeting on May 11th, 1859, but it was never carried into effect. Shortly afterwards, however, it was decided to open a branch butcher's shop at Werneth. One of the Society's cottages was adapted to the business, and was duly opened on June 25th, 1859. It was for a time only open on Saturdays.

The principle here adopted is the one carried out by the most successful Societies. It is that instead of centralising all the shops, and bringing the members to the shops, it is better to take the shops to the members. Since that period the turnover has grown to a very large amount, the last year's meat sales nearly reaching £53,000. There are now branch butchers' shops at the following places:—Werneth, Westwood, Yorkshire Street, Hollinwood, Radclyffe Street, Ashton Road, Featherstall Road, Middleton Road, Manchester Street, Butler Green, Hollins, Middleton Junction, Rochdale Road, Hathershaw, Coppice, Cowhill, Garforth Street, Chapel Road, Park Road, Turf Lane, Stanley Road, Falcon Street, Coldhurst, and Westhill.

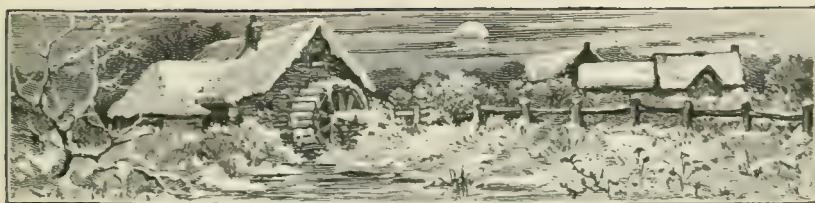
The central butchering trade has at various times been removed, but it now occupies a very commodious and lofty room at the corner of King Street and Foundry Street. The abattoirs are fitted up with every requirement in the extensive premises in Foundry Street, and there is ample facility for increasing the trade as the carnivorous tastes of the members may develop.

The following are a few details of a year's sales to the members. The particulars are taken from a list supplied by Mr. James Slate, who has been employed by the Society since 1868, and who was appointed Manager of the Butchering Department in 1877:

Description.	Number.	Weight in lbs.
Cattle	1,484	937,287
Sheep and Lambs	5,341	196,877
Calves.....	223	20,936
Pigs.....	1,788	264,034
Turkeys	2,038	20,380
Geese and Ducks	644	
Chickens	3,091	
Rabbits	10,891	



NEW MILLINERY AND MANTLE DEPARTMENT, KING STREET.



CHAPTER XIII.

Drapery, Millinery and Dressmaking, Boots and Shoes, &c.

The Dule's i' this bonnet o' mine,
Mi ribbins 'll never be reet.

Waulh.

My father should wear a broadcloth coat,
My brother should sail a painted boat,
I'd dress my mother so grand and gay,
And the baby should have a new toy each day.

Whittier.

IT was but a natural step from food to clothing. Food and clothing are man's chief and almost only wants. Given these with sufficiency and certainty and he is a rich man. Given also good health and he is a wealthy man. If he carries out the principle of Co-operation he is a wise man. Food and clothing go to make up the trade of the world. Production and Distribution begin and end there. The establishment of a draper's shop meant the beginning of local Co-operative production. It has extended in many directions since, but it had its beginning then. The actual manufacture of clothing was only small at first, but it was the start. The start is not everything, but without it nothing would be accomplished.

There were two sections on the Progressive Committee, and they wanted to move in different directions. One was for pushing the meat trade, in the belief that the Oldham people, with their well-known liking for roast beef, beef dumplings, and

flesh cakes, would be sure to make it succeed. The other section favoured the idea of making the two butchers' shops already opened remunerative before reaching further in that direction. They felt strongly that drapery would pay, and they persuaded the members to try. This meant taking another shop, which involved additional expense, but premises were found near to the old grocer's shop in Manchester Street, and the first draper's shop was opened in September, 1859, at 47, Manchester Street.

The business has proved to be one of the most successful that the Society has undertaken. Its growth has been remarkable. Its first year's receipts were of the most encouraging character.

Two years later it had developed to such an extent that much larger premises were required, and a removal was made to the new building which was to serve as Grocery, Drapery, Tailoring, and Boot and Shoe Departments, whilst an upper room was to be designated the CO-OPERATIVE HALL.

Gradually but surely the department pushed its way until the boots and shoes had to move; then the grocery was compelled to find fresh quarters, and allow the drapery to monopolise the whole structure. Still growing and still asking for more room, the Committee found it necessary to further increase the drapery accommodation by erecting the large extension in King Street, to be opened during the Jubilee celebrations.

During the last year the total drapery sales have reached £69,128. Out of this the Central Drapery has done business to the amount of £41,405, leaving £27,723 for the total trade of seven branches. These branches are situated at Westwood, Hollinwood, Ashton Road, Featherstall Road, Middleton Road, Middleton Junction, and Park Road.

It was not until many years had elapsed that millinery and dressmaking became an essential part of the business of drapery. The shop is now always well patronised by the fair sex, but anyone wishing to see it in the fulness of its popularity should pay it a visit during "divi." week. Very few women would think of drawing their "divi." without having the customary look in the "Drapery," and having the customary look invariably ends in some business being transacted. There is either a shirt for our Tom, or an apron for our Ann, or a dress

piece for our 'Liza, or something else wanted for some member of the family. Thus you get "divi." upon "divi." When you get interest upon interest it is said to be compound interest, and, therefore, when you get "divi." upon "divi." it is compound "divi."

It has already been remarked that the Society has been fortunate in its selection of principal servants. This is especially true of the Drapery Manager. Mr. William Longley Holgate, the Manager of the Drapery Department, commenced to work in the first draper's shop in Manchester Street on June 14th, 1860, the then Manager being Mr. Joseph Turner. Mr. Holgate has not only the honour of being the oldest servant of the Society, but he has the greater honour of having risen, by reason of his own industry and integrity, from the lowest to the highest rung of the ladder in his profession. He was one of the few who were bound to an apprenticeship. His indentures were signed by James Hilton, President, and John Hollinhead, Secretary, on behalf of the Society, on August 12th, 1864. He was appointed Manager of the department before the termination of his apprenticeship, and the conspicuous success which he has achieved has been as gratifying to the members as it must have been to himself.

In the early days of the Society one department was considered sufficient for both boots and shoes and drapery. Of course, there was no millinery and dressmaking then. The shopman had to be all things to all men—or rather women. One member would perhaps want a number of yards of silk to make her daughter, who was going to be married, a present of a new dress; another would ask for some calico to make her little girl a new bishop (apron); a third would want a pair of new boots, and a fourth would come in dragging a rough and dirty lad who wanted a pair of new clogs. In former days clogs were regarded as a kind of social barometer. A lad whose parents could afford to buy him boots to wear on Sundays was considered to be "weel off," and he had to start and be very careful with whom he played. But silk or surat, clogs or "shoon" (shoes) were, for a long time, supplied at the Drapery Department. The man who supplied the silk would likewise handle the clogs. But the department grew. It wanted more elbow room, and the capacious building which

outsiders prophesied would prove a veritable white elephant was found to be too small even for the drapery business alone. So in the year 1861 the Boot and Shoe was made a separate department to stand, as the members said, "on its own bottom." Its success has not been of the most pronounced character, because at the end of forty-one years it has only justified the addition of one branch, which was opened at Hollinwood on April 17th, 1878. The statistics are not obtainable for the first few years of this department, but a comparison of the receipts for the years 1878 and 1900 will be sufficient to show that the average rate of the Society's progress has not been maintained.

	1878.				1900.		
	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
King Street.....	4,597	2	3	....	7,906	0	7½
Hollinwood.....	1,296	0	10½	....	1,162	15	0½

Another kindred business to the drapery is the tailoring and outfitting. Curious to state, this department has never grown beyond the limits of one shop. It began in King Street; it is in King Street yet. It is only fair to say that it has grown. It has often required increased accommodation, but there has not yet been a demand for a branch tailor's shop.

This only serves to show how human everybody is, after all. They have all their likes and dislikes, which even the enormous power of "divi," of which all are said to be so fond, cannot alter. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," and surely Co-operators are afflicted with a degree of vanity as well as other people. They love to speak of their family doctor and their family tailor as a part of the household furniture, and whilst they are prepared to trust the Store with the feeding of the body they are just a little doubtful when it comes to the question of clothing it.

The Society commenced the tailoring business in 1861, and was fixed in its present quarters in 1878. The Jubilee Year has witnessed a considerable enlargement of the accommodation, and possibly a future historian may have the pleasure of chronicling a corresponding increase in trade from this date.





CHAPTER XIV.

Trifles.

Think naught a trifle, though it small appear ;
Small sands the mountain, moments make the year,
And trifles, life.

Young.

A pebble on the streamlet scant
Has turned the course of many a river ;
A dewdrop on the baby plant
Has warped the giant oak for ever.

THERE need be no apology for devoting a chapter to a few matters which, in themselves, might be considered trifling. A gentleman once visiting Michael Angelo said, "I cannot see that you have made any progress since my last visit." "But," said the famous sculptor, "I have retouched this part, polished that, softened that feature, brought out that muscle, given some expression to this lip, more energy to that limb, &c." "Yes, but those are only trifles," interjected the visitor. "That may be so," replied the great artist, "but trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle."

It is necessary in a commercial establishment like a Co-operative Society to deal promptly and effectively with trifles. It may provoke smiles and contempt from your enemies, but it is essential that it must be done, otherwise they will kill you. Here is an illustration. For some time the price of sugar had been a troublesome question to the Committee of the Society. It was known that the margin of profit upon it stood at almost vanishing point, and that in paying the usual dividend upon it a heavy charge had to be

made upon the profits of other commodities. This was a great temptation to many to take undue advantage of the Stores. Some people bought largely of sugar who bought little of anything else. It was also discovered that several private traders preferred to purchase their sugar from the Store rather than through the wholesale market, because the dividend amounted to more than the usual trade profit on that article. This was more than the Co-operators had bargained for, so they promptly took the matter in hand and directed that no checks should be given on sugar. A good deal of ridicule was attempted to be thrown upon them by the general public for this course of action, but, as they were in a position to know the needs of their own business best, they pursued the even tenor of their way regardless of jibes and sneers.

This practice was continued until 1869, when it was thought that it would materially aid in the efficient keeping of the accounts if dividend were paid upon all articles sold over the counter. To do this an increased charge had to be made for sugar, which caused a flutter of joy amongst private shopkeepers, but they have probably regained their composure, as the members, recognising the wisdom of the decision, quietly and contentedly acquiesced in the arrangement.

Another irritating source of annoyance to the Committee was the constant sale of the tin checks by non-members to members and even by members to members. Probably this arose in the first place from one or two necessitous cases. Suppose that a poor widowed woman was unable to pay the entrance fee that was chargeable then. She might purchase her goods from the Store, but the members, who naturally thought that they ought to have some advantage over non-members, had resolved that only 8d., which was gradually increased to 1s. 8d., in the pound should be paid on non-members' purchases. It was equally natural, then, for some kind-hearted member to offer either to give her a sum equal to what the dividend was expected to be or to take in the checks along with her own at the end of the quarter and hand over the dividend afterwards.

This led to the principle being adopted in 1867 of paying to non-members who brought in their checks at the end of the quarter a dividend equal to that of the members less twopence in the pound. That system was in operation until 1892, when

it was found advisable to give further encouragement to those unfortunate people who cannot wait from quarter to quarter for their dividend. One of the most effective ways of getting people to do right is to make it not worth their while to do wrong. Whoever hears of manufacturers of base coins making counterfeit sovereigns? It would not be worth their while. But they can make base silver coins because the metal of which they are composed is not worth so much as the coin which they represent. If every coin were worth neither less nor more as a metal than it is as coin of the realm there would be neither illegal manufacture nor destruction of coins.

This principle was realised by Co-operators, and the Industrial Society now offers to any member or non-member 2s. 6d. in the pound for all checks brought in during the quarter. This can be obtained at any branch shop by tendering the checks over the counter.

Another resolution, dated September 16th, 1859, marks a very distinctive feature of the Oldham Industrial Society. Many eminent Co-operators profess to be incapable of understanding why the Society confines the membership to the one head of a family. In most Societies several members of one family are still admitted to membership of the Society, and are entitled to invest money in the funds to the extent of the statutory limit of £200. The Committee of the King Street Society were of opinion that unlimited membership was liable to abuse, as instances were known where such membership was used for the purpose of investing capital, and not for the purpose of trade. Under these circumstances it was thought that a man and his wife should not both be members, and so judicious has this rule proved to be that it has remained in operation until the present day.

In addition to this, it has been found absolutely necessary to limit the amount which each member could invest in the funds of the Society. One of the most remarkable features of Co-operation is the confidence which it has now established, and the capital which it can now command. The sum of £200, which was fixed by Act of Parliament as a limit of the member's liability, was not intended as a limit to a man's increased savings or capital, but it implied a want of confidence in the stability of the movement, and £200 was to be the limit of a member's possible loss. All that is changed now. What

was considered a wise limit of possible loss has suggested another limit to unsympathetic and un-Co-operative gain.

Where Co-operative Societies could originally count their capital by tens of pounds, they can now count it by tens of thousands of pounds. Men who formerly would not trust them with a shilling would now be glad to give them unlimited credit on the usual terms of Co-operative security and interest. Thus the capital has grown from a year of famine to a year of plenty.

The following shows the increase of the share capital of the Oldham Industrial Co-operative Society: 1850, £56; 1851, £462; 1857, £1,390; 1867, £34,011; 1877, £70,455; 1887, £95,404; 1897, £104,319; 1900, £131,237.

Co-operative Societies can now obtain more capital than they can profitably employ. This is largely due to the fact that these Societies pay a greater interest than can be secured elsewhere with the same safety and convenience. Co-operators have a constitutional weakness for 5 per cent. They say that the movement started with it, and that it ought to continue it if possible. But circumstances have been too strong for them. With the money market at 3 per cent it was not business to pay 5. So some of the Societies, the Industrial included, have trespassed upon their traditional preserves and reduced their rate of interest to 4 per cent, but to mitigate the evil which was certain to arise from the fact of it still being above the market value it has been determined to place a drastic limit upon the amount upon which interest will be paid.

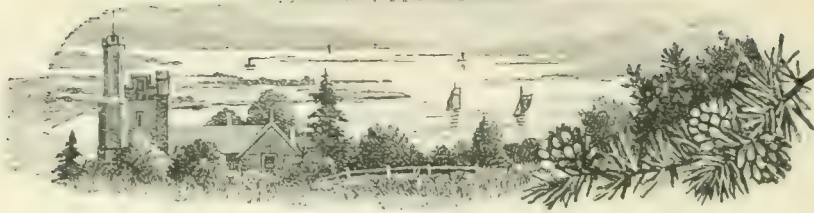
Only once in the history of the Industrial Society has it been found desirable to retrace its steps in the direction of higher amounts. This was in 1898, when the large extensions then in progress rendered the available bank balance necessary for current business purposes somewhat insufficient and inconvenient.

The following are the alterations in the prescribed amount of share capital allowed per member:—

Reduction from	£200 to	£100	.....	in 1871.
..	£100	..	£50	..... .. 1876.
..	£50	..	£30	..... .. 1882.
..	£30	..	£25	..... .. 1889.
..	£25	..	£20	..... .. 1895.
Increase from	£20	..	£25	..... .. 1898.

Another question in which the most bitterness centred was that of relatives of Committee-men being servants of the Society. Charges were openly made of favouritism being shown. It was said that promotion was impossible for those who had no relatives on the Board. There is no doubt that there was some truth in the indictment. It could only be expected that the Committee-men would exercise the influence which they possessed on behalf of their own families more actively than they would on behalf of other people. The operation of the system acted injuriously also to those servants who, though worthy of promotion, and having relatives on the Board, refrained from taking positions that were tainted with such suspicion. It was felt on all hands that, in the interest of the servants and of the Society itself, the Committee and their servants must be above suspicion in this respect. Naturally where personal interests are involved the struggle becomes most severe. Those who had possession were reluctant to give way, whilst the general body of members were equally determined that the Society should not be ruined for the sake of the pecuniary advantages held by a few. After a very severe conflict and the expenditure of much angry feeling, it was resolved that Committee-men should not be allowed to vote when relatives were candidates for positions of service, and that no member should retain his seat on the Committee while such relatives were engaged by the Society.





CHAPTER XV.

A Dark Cloud.

Oh, they listened, looked, and waited,
Till their hope became despair;
And the sobs of low bewailing
Filled the pauses of their prayer.

Whittier.

THE Society was only able to open two more branches before a time of gloom and of trial set in, not only for the Society and the town, but for Lancashire generally. People "listened, looked, and waited, till their hope became despair," for the rift in the war cloud that was so long in coming.

On the 11th of May, 1859, a General Meeting had recommended the Committee to establish a branch "at the other side of Oldham Church," but it was not until August that a favourable opportunity presented itself for acting on the suggestion. At that time a shop was available next door to the Grapes Inn, Yorkshire Street, and, after a thorough inspection of it, the Committee decided to take it if satisfactory terms could be arranged. In less than a week the terms were fixed, and on the 15th of August, 1859, it was resolved to accept the proposal of Mr. Edward Fielding to occupy the shop at a rental of £25 per year. A lease was drawn up, the shop was fitted with all the necessary requirements, and was opened for business purposes on November 1st, 1859.

The next claimant for attention in this respect was Westwood, and the Board was recommended on November 5th, 1859, to open a branch in that locality. A small shop was secured in Middleton Road, just below the junction with Featherstall Road, and now numbered 185, and was successfully opened on December 19th, 1859. The building is now a tiny cottage, but for some years after its occupation by the Co-operative Society it was tenanted as a shop by a noted Oldham character—King Dody.

It is but a small house, and was soon too small for the Co-operators of the neighbourhood. Land was taken, new buildings erected, and the present Westwood Branch Store was opened on March 19th, 1862. But the times were inauspicious. The demon of war was lifting its head, and the Cotton Panic, which was destined never to be forgotten by the workers of that generation, soon began to make its presence felt.

Soon the thoughts of men were to be drawn away from the problems of Co-operative extensions and fixed on the greater problem of how to live. Soon the clash of the Confederate arms, though far away in America, seemed to echo and re-echo through the silent mills and the empty "butteries" of Lancashire. What the people of this manufacturing county suffered can be best imagined by a perusal of the graphic stories of Edwin Waugh, Ben Brierley, and Samuel Laycock, wherein, and in their inimitable language, the life of the Lancashire folks is depicted in a manner the charm of which will last for ever. Oldham was one of the first to participate in the great struggle for bread. Blockaded ports meant no transport of cotton, and no cotton meant the stoppage of Oldham mills. Gradually the working hours were reduced, and in many instances they ceased working altogether. The prospect was cheerless in the extreme. Almost all industries, including the great machine shops, were crippled, and the work-people were only partially employed. It was found necessary, in order to prevent literal starvation amongst the poor people, to inaugurate huge systems of relief, and influential men in various Lancashire towns generously came to the aid of suffering humanity. A Central Relief Committee was formed and, through its agency, relief, to the value of £1,773,647, was distributed. Branches were formed from the county organisation, and thousands of needy cases in Oldham were

relieved. Generally the assistance rendered was in the shape of food and clothing, and as many of the recipients thereof were members of the Store it will be easily understood that under such unfavourable circumstances the trade of the Society could hardly be expected to increase. Many predictions of failure were uttered, but the Society held manfully on, whilst its business actually grew.

But the greatest achievement of those dark days was the heroic determination of the Co-operative members to keep free from debt. It was a hard struggle, and the odds were against the poor man, but he conquered. Who shall say how much of the extraordinary growth of Oldham is due to the lessons of economy and thrift learnt in the school of Co-operation? Habits of carefulness and sobriety were formed which, if they could be fairly traced, would, no doubt, be found to have been the means of furnishing that nucleus from which the whole of the cotton trade controlled by Limited Companies has sprung. If Co-operation has done nothing else it will live in history as the greatest moral teacher of sobriety and manliness of modern times. It is said that adversity has its uses as well as prosperity, and it may be claimed that the severe lessons learnt and felt during the Cotton Panic were the forerunners and harbingers of the wonderful progress which Oldham has since witnessed.

Looking back upon that time the writer remembers how, as a little lad, it fell to his lot to fetch the "relief" it was generally called "dow" then for the family. For some time the "dow" took the form of loaves, sugar, &c., but after a while, instead of the recipients being sent away from the schools, in which the Relief Committee sat, with loaves of bread tied in a handkerchief, tickets were issued which could be exchanged for food and clothing at most of the respectable shops in the town. That the Stores were not considered respectable may be inferred from the fact that some difficulty arose in trying to persuade those in charge of the "relief" to acknowledge the claims of the Society to a portion of the trade in supplying food to some of its members upon presentation of these tickets. This was eventually conceded, but no dividend was allowed on goods exchanged for a "dow" ticket.

It may be readily imagined that the Co-operative Society required tender and vigilant care to guide it safely through

those troublous times. The extensions were necessarily fewer, but the members, nevertheless, found themselves in a position to erect large premises in King Street, in addition to the new shop at Westwood. The building, which now includes the Millinery and Drapery Department and the Co-operative Hall, was opened on September 12th, 1861. It was considered a bold venture at the time, but subsequent events have justified the policy of that period.





CHAPTER XVI.

A General Advance.

There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.

Shakespeare.

WHEN Lord Roberts arrived at Bloemfontein after his rapid march from Kimberley, he allowed his troops to rest for some weeks before he again began his advance on Pretoria. Many military critics commented adversely on his policy. It was afterwards found that that policy was right. The men and the horses needed rest; reinforcements of every description were urgently required. By and by he moved on again, and the wisdom of his brief interval was patent to everybody. His advance was almost one unbroken record of bloodless victories. The Store needed a little rest before entering upon its line of advance. The utter desolation caused by the American Civil War put a check upon the extensions of the Co-operative Society.

Save those mentioned at the conclusion of the last chapter no attempts were made to add either to the possessions or the liabilities of the members. With most of the mills stopped, or working short time, the people had but little money to spend, even upon food wherewith to live. The need of loaves was greater than the need of bricks. But the suffering and trials were not all loss. Most of those who in Oldham enjoy a comfortable competency to-day owe it to the care, the thrift, and the economy learnt and practised during those necessitous years. Many people who feelingly sang—

Hard times! hard times! come again no more.



WILLIAM GEE, *Late Manager.*



WILLIAM L. HOLGATE.

resolved that at least, should they come again, they would be better prepared for them. So to many the Cotton Panic proved a blessing in disguise.

No wonder, therefore, that the business of the Store increased. The prevalent distress compelled people to seek the best means of helping themselves. This meant increased prosperity for the Store, and increased prosperity for the Store implied more comforts and happiness for its members. Some of our most respected opponents may not see this, but it is true.

The Civil War commenced in 1861. At that time the Society's share capital was £10,452, and the yearly sales £54,093. On the 16th of February of the same year the Society was incorporated under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act. The war ended in 1865. At the end of that year the share capital stood at £20,645, and the sales amounted to £60,543. It is rather remarkable that the share capital should, in such depressed times, increase in a greater ratio than the sales, but it serves to show that in such an unexampled crisis people who had money had implicit confidence in the Store.

It was not until the year 1867 that the disposition to build again manifested itself. It takes a long time to adjust the differences, heal the wounds, assuage the sorrows, and mitigate the distress occasioned by war.

The Store re-entered the path of extensions very cautiously. In 1867 two new branches were opened, to be followed in 1869 by one. In 1872 one branch was opened and the drapery business added to another, whilst 1873 saw two more branches extend their facilities to members. Hollinwood broke the record in 1874 by commencing a butcher's shop, and the opening of the new building in Foundry Street was the only note of progress struck in 1875. Indications of activity were observable in 1877 by the addition of one branch Store, and by the commencement of drapery in one district and butchering in another.

Whether it be the fact that increased members naturally follow increased dividends, or whether increased dividends follow increased members, is a problem somewhat beyond the scope of this history. But, whichever answer is correct, it is certainly true that the expansion of both departments was, at

this period of the Society's history, remarkable. Taking the year 1870, there were three 2s. dividends and one of 2s. 3d. In 1871 there were only two 2s. dividends and one each of 2s. 3d. and 2s. 5d. This was the last year of 2s. dividends. In 1872 the highest figure reached was 2s. 4d.; 1873, 2s. 4d.; 1874, 2s. 7d.; 1875, 2s. 10d.; 1876 7 8, 2s. 10d.; whilst the September quarter of 1879 saw the first payment of a 3s. dividend. Yet during all these years there was a steady and constant stream of new members and a solid growth of business. There were fluctuations which, no doubt, were largely influenced by rising or falling prices or by purely local circumstances, but in the main the progress made was sufficient to satisfy the most exacting and sanguine enthusiast. Since that time there have been two dividends of 2s. 8d., two dividends of 2s. 9d., ten dividends of 2s. 10d., and seventy-two dividends of 3s.

It is unnecessary to dwell at length upon these accumulating proofs of the Society's growing strength. The opening of one Branch Store is, after all, very much like the opening of another Branch Store, and unless there are some special circumstances surrounding the existence of any branch it is inadvisable to repeat the story. The total, however, of eight new branches and the inclusion of drapery at two branches and butchering at two branches in eleven years cannot be deemed less than satisfactory.

To one of these it may be expected that more than a passing allusion will be made. Hollinwood has played an important part by its contributions to the welfare and success of the Industrial Society. It commenced on January 7th, 1867, and its growth has been of a striking character. In 1872 the extent of its sales and the distance the shop was from the Central Store were considered sufficient reasons for opening a Drapery Department. In 1874 additional premises were erected in order to find accommodation for a Butchering Department, and again in 1878 it was decided to give facilities whereby members living in the vicinity of Hollinwood could purchase Co-operative boots and shoes without having to walk to King Street for them. This was a greater convenience than will appear to the casual reader. It must be remembered that the Hollinwood Branch Store was opened thirteen years before the Hollinwood Railway, and that the tramway which is now so much patronised on the Oldham and Hollinwood branch was

not opened until 1880, so that Hollinwood was a sort of semi-detached village. It was no wonder, therefore, that it was exceptionally treated in the matter of special departments. At the same time the district proved itself Co-operative and justified its existence.

Another interesting feature in connection with the opening of the Hollinwood Branch Shop is the recollection it awakens that its first Manager was Mr. William Gee, who afterwards became the General Manager of the Society. He was a successful Branch Manager, and merited his promotion to the higher rank. He has been a faithful servant, and the Society owes much of its prosperity to the energy, the great abilities, and the unquestionable honesty of Mr. Gee. He entered the service of the Society as a porter when he was about nineteen years of age. His wages were 13s. per week. He became head shopman at Werneth Branch, first Manager at Hollinwood, and was appointed General Manager at the age of twenty-six.

But the Co-operation of Hollinwood district has not been confined to the principal shops at Hollinwood. It has spread and taken root in many directions. In 1877 new premises were opened at Butler Green for grocery and butchering business, and the receipts now average about £172 per week. A similar branch was opened in Hollins in 1881, where the trade reaches £145 per week. The year 1892 saw a handsome building completed in Chapel Road, where the grocery and butchering business amount to £216 per week. The branch at Turf Lane opened in 1895, but the butcher's shop was deferred until 1897. The weekly receipts average £204. The latest addition to the branches in that locality was made in 1898, when the extension again included a grocer's and a butcher's shop. The weekly turnover averages £267. Altogether the Society has in the district of Hollinwood six grocers' shops, six butchers' shops, one drapery, one boot and shoe department, and one coal station, and a weekly trade to the value of £1,534.

Hollinwood is but typical of the whole area covered by the Society's operations. The principle embodied is that of decentralisation.

There is a good deal of talk now about centralisation and decentralisation. The early Co-operators advocated more

power to the people; modern politicians would transfer more power to the Government. This is the difference between decentralisation and centralisation. All education, recreation, charities, taxes, &c., belong, according to some people, to the Government.

The Oldham Co-operative Societies, however, adopt the policy of taking shops to the members rather than that of trusting to the members to come to the shops. The wisdom of this course has been apparent. The modern habits and customs of the people preclude the thought of travelling a mile or two to "buy in" the week's groceries. Private traders' shops abound almost everywhere, and they are only too willing to carry their customers' goods, even if it be only across the street. The Stores will not do this. There have been several attempts made by a few of the members to follow the example of the private traders in this respect, but so far they have decided to remain a democratic body, and to keep their pride within the bounds of carrying home a parcel of goods which they have bought. This explains the erection of so many branch shops.

The next decade is conspicuous for its continuation of the steady advance. From the year 1877 to 1887 six branch grocery and nine butchering establishments were erected in different parts of the borough. They were widely distributed over the northern, southern, eastern, and western portions of the district. The grocers' shops were situate at Hollins, Middleton Junction, Rochdale Road, Hathershaw, Coppice, and Cowhill; and the butchers' shops at Ashton Road, Middleton Road, Ratcliffe Street, Yorkshire Street, Manchester Street, Featherstall Road, Hollins, Middleton Junction, and Cowhill. In addition to these a drapery and boot and shoe shop were opened at Ashton Road. The average combined takings at these branches amount to £1,543 weekly.

The period from 1887 to 1899 fully maintains the Society's reputation for healthy and vigorous growth. During these years there were grocers' shops opened at Garforth Street, Chapel Road, Park Road, Turf Lane, Stanley Road, Coldhurst, Falcon Street, and Westhill. Butchers' shops were also opened at Coppice, Rochdale Road, Garforth Street, Chapel Road, Hathershaw, Park Road, Turf Lane, Stanley Road, Coldhurst, Falcon Street, and Westhill. There was, besides,

a marked improvement in the drapery business, and shops were established at Featherstall Road, Park Road, Werneth, Middleton Road, and Middleton Junction. The total weekly receipts of these additions reaches an average of £2,245.

The latest of these branches is a movable structure built of wood, its original cost being about £266. It is placed temporarily at Westhill, but will shortly be removed to try other fields and pastures new. The object is that Co-operation should feel its way in certain parts of the town and ascertain, by means of a trial shop, whether it is likely to be acceptable and successful before the Society incurs the great responsibility of taking land and erecting buildings thereon. The first experiment in this direction has been eminently successful. The wooden shop is already doing more business than some of the older established Stores. A permanent structure is being put upon the site, when the erratic wayfarer will try its fortune elsewhere.





CHAPTER XVII.

The Central Premises.

Yours is the courage which but few suspect ;
Yours is the courage which can bear neglect ;
Yours is the courage which can suffer long,
The courage of the man whose soul is strong ;
Who labours on, still doing silent good,
Nor stays his hand for man's ingratitude.

Mackenzie Bell.

JUST as formerly all roads led to Rome, so the branches of a great institution lead up to the ever active centre, from which radiate the force, the energy, and the will that make them live. When all roads led to Rome, Rome was not only the law giver, but the life giver and the soul inspirer of the universe. If you would have a truly healthy body you must have a healthy mind, and if you would have a strong and vigorous institution you must have a watchful, a wise, and a courageous head. It must be a centre full of vitality, full of zeal, yet quick to feel the throbbing of every heart and the beating of every pulse.

The central premises of a Store generally represent the seat of power as well as the members' highest ideals. It is sometimes said that our Store Committees are just what the members make them. A better description would be to say that they are just a reflex of what the members are. If the members are dull and lethargic, you have a slow and somnolent Committee. If the members are smart and thrifty, you will have an active and prudent Committee. Just as the photograph is a reflex of your features, so the Store Committee is a reflex of the highest aims and aspirations of its members.



CENTRAL NEWSROOMS, LIBRARY, &c.

In the same way the central premises of a Store represent, for the time being, the Committee's standard of perfection in architecture, adaptability, and business capacity. There may be cases where the central premises are insufficient and insignificant, whilst there are branches which are commodious and imposing. Under ordinary circumstances this will soon rectify itself, because there will surely be a survival of the fittest, and the only way for the old district to preserve its possession of authority will be to make it fit to survive.

Measured by this standard, the Industrial Society has no reason to fear the judgment of contemporaries or of posterity. Of its branches sufficient has been said; of its central premises a few words may be desirable.

It is unnecessary to go back fifty years to discover the extraordinary changes which have been so characteristic of King Street. It is not quite thirty years since the present drapery establishment was opened. Before its erection the land upon which it now stands was the site of an old foundry, from which the name of Foundry Street is derived. That was the beginning of a marvellous transformation. The foundry is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more. Old buildings have disappeared and old landmarks have vanished as if in the twinkling of an eye.

In 1875 the grocery business was removed to its new quarters in Foundry Street. It was thought inadvisable to put it in a side street, but the acquisition of property in King Street was both difficult and expensive. Owners of property have a peculiar knack of knowing how to raise the price when its purchase is desired by Co-operative Societies. It is strange how, from being a poor and insignificant body of men, they are now regarded as the most wealthy of tradesmen, and proper subjects for extortion. It is a well-known fact that even some musicians have been so imbued with this idea that they have made it a rule to charge a higher fee for their services when required by Co-operators than they would when serving the general public. But, regardless of price, the Society has been forced by pressure of business to widen its borders. In 1878 the enlarged tailor's shop in King Street was opened, and, the accommodation again proving too small, new premises, doubling the capacity, were added in May, 1900. A Gentlemen's Outfitting Department was also opened on the

30th May, 1900, to be worked in conjunction with the Tailoring Department. In this quiet and unostentatious way new features are added, the members' wants are more easily and more plentifully supplied, and the Society grows in utility and strength.

In 1879 the Society commenced business as house furnishers, with the late Mr. Francis Richardson as first Manager. It was refreshing to hear the speeches made at the Quarterly Meeting in favour of this new departure. Here were men who had known the time when they could scarcely afford the luxury of a tin whistle now proposing to enter upon a trade which included everything from a blacking brush to a pianoforte. The blacking brushes have been there a long while, but the piano has only just arrived. It comes to celebrate the Society's Jubilee, and it serves to remind us that there are hundreds, if not thousands, of the members who have pianos in their homes who would never have attained to that comfortable position had it not been for Co-operation. They started humbly, and the Furniture Department began unpretentiously. It did not start with pianos and end with blacking brushes; it commenced with blacking brushes, and has gone on cultivating the taste of the members with its choice stock of beautiful ornaments and its artistic household requisites until it has led up to the pianos. In 1887 the department was removed to the Foundry Street premises, where it remained until July 20th, 1900, when it returned to King Street to occupy the new and elaborate building erected for its special use. Another strange development has characterised the peculiarities of this branch of business. Not only have members manifested an inclination to pride in the household, but they have exhibited a tendency to give it play upon their dress; so, to meet the growing demand, the Furnishing Department was made to serve also as a sort of semi-jeweller's shop. Now it is possible for the high and the low, the rich and the poor, to get anything they may want at the Co-operative Store. The receipts of the Furnishing Department for the year ending September, 1900, amounted to £7,083. 17s. 3d.

The years 1886-7 saw enormous additions to the Society's central premises. The whole of the land on the southern side of Foundry Street and extending to John Street was taken on lease and valuable property erected upon it, whilst extensive

additions were made in King Street. The first to be ready for occupation were the new stables, part of which were opened on December 2nd, 1886. These stables are now finely equipped, and offer every facility and accommodation for a splendid stud of horses, but they are already proving inadequate to meet the Society's growing requirements. Some idea of the Society's extensive business may be formed by watching the turnout of the horses as they go to work in the morning. You will not only be pleased at the appearance of the animals but amazed at their number. Many of the members do not know that they are joint proprietors of a great commercial establishment which requires no fewer than 38 horses to efficiently carry on its business.

Then in 1886 the Grocery Department found itself in its present home. Like a healthy child, it had again outgrown its clothes. This is generally a satisfactory sign. Nature knows no stoppage, no rest. When you get to the top there is no halting, you must go down the other side. Nations are like institutions, and institutions are like individuals—when they cease to grow they begin to decline. The continual growth of the Industrial Society is evidence of its vitality. In 1850 it started business in a humble way in Manchester Street. In 1855 it removed to King Street, where the Grocery Department remained until 1861, when it became part occupier of the large building then erected. Again in 1875 it changed its abode to Foundry Street, but was not content, like the Furnishing Department, until it had returned to its native heath in King Street. This consummation so devoutly to be wished was accomplished on December 8th, 1886.

The trade of the Society had now reached such gigantic dimensions that it was found necessary to have ample warehousing facilities, so the present warehouse in Foundry Street was built and opened in 1887.

In 1889 a branch of industry initiated the development of which supplies one of the indications of the great social evolution which is quietly but surely taking place. Fifty years ago not even the boldest agitator would have dared to prophesy that long before the century had run its course public bakeries would have become general, and that many good housewives would have ceased, if not almost forgotten how, to bake bread. But events move quicker and with more unerring precision

than the feeble attempts of man. As the upheavals in the ocean bed are constantly shifting the waters of the great seas, so the silent but steadily changing conditions of our industrial surroundings constitute a more powerful factor than the strongest Government in moulding the living character of the people. The years which saw the birth of the Co-operative movement also marked the introduction and extension of the factory system and the decline and almost disappearance of the old village life.

Those gentle hours that plenty bade to bloom,
Those calm desires that ask'd but little room,
Those healthful sports that graced the peaceful scene,
Lived in each look, and brightened all the green ;
These, far departing, seek a kinder shore,
And rural mirth and manners are no more.

It would be almost impossible to find another town where the old order hath given place to the new with such rapidity and with such completeness as it has done in Oldham. One of our greatest authorities upon local history, Mr. S. O. Ward, J. P., says in one of his valuable contributions to the Industrial Society's monthly "Record":—

The ring and sound of the weaver's shuttle were a distinguishing feature in this locality. Across the way, and opposite to the cottage doors, were the cottage gardens, which had in them well-stocked fruit trees of great variety. What with sweet-scented flowers, and the well-laden fruit trees, and the cottage windows plentifully supplied with flowering plants, and the opportunity the good housewife had to go into the garden and gather whatever vegetables she required when she wished to make the pot to boil, we may truly say that the then inhabitants of Pipe Row had in their day some share of life's pleasures to which the present generation are strangers. I have often heard it stated by old people that the name of Pipe Row was given to this block of buildings from the fact that at noontide the weavers, after their mid-day meal, would come and sit at their front doors enjoying their "weed" by smoking their long clay pipes, and from so many being thus engaged some wag named the houses Pipe Row.

Even after the period to which Mr. Ward refers, and during the early years of the Co-operative movement, many of the customs so quaintly pictured survived. The "forenoon's baggin'," the "gill o' whoam brewed," and the long clay pipe were essential parts of the daily life of the disappearing race of handloom weavers for many years after the commencement of the Industrial Society. What would

these simple-minded and contented people have thought if some one had told them that in a very few years, comparatively, not only would these old-time customs have died away but that the old-fashioned baking day, with its ever welcome new muffins and its "fatty cakes," would have vanished as completely as the dew before the rising sun? Yet all this has taken place. Who ever hears of "forenoon's baggin'" now? The "whoam brewed" lingers only in the memory. Who can measure the issues involved in that apparently small change? The enormity of the nation's drink bill is often commented upon as pointing to the growing depravity of the people. How much of it is due to the sudden uprooting of customs which have sufficed for ages? There is an eternal law of compensation somewhere, and if you overstep the bounds of natural law in one direction you will have a corresponding rebound in another. The pace at which people live in the mills and workshops has a tendency to make them indifferent to and unfitted for the quiet, monotonous enjoyments of home life which were so satisfying to their forefathers. There must be an antidote to the wearying round of daily toil, there must be an interval of ease, or the tremendous tension at which they work would break them. And so you find them in the theatres, the public-houses, and on the football field. In the homes you find them seeking relaxation from the mental and bodily strain by transferring to outside agencies duties and obligations which at one time were held almost as sacred as the rites by which their religion was made impressive. Thus are old home associations broken up and new systems established.

For some years the Store Bakery made but very little headway. There was, after all, a sort of prejudice against the public baked bread and an excusable leaning to the old home baked loaf, but the later progress of the Bakery Department shows that these natural tendencies have given place to the new order, and that, ere long, there will be no more talk about "shifting th' bakin' day," because the baking day will have "shuffled off the scene" altogether.

Ten years ago the annual trade of the Bakery realised £2,486. 12s. 2d., whilst the last year's receipts amounted to £7,706. So rapid has been the growth that the old ovens had to be taken out and replaced and increased in numbers by

others of a later design. Bread vans are constantly plying between the Bakery at the central premises and the various branches to supply the ever-growing demand for the popular Store loaf.

Another illustration of the changed habits and condition of the people may be seen in the altered circumstances governing the coal trade. It has already been stated in these pages that the coal agent as he is known to-day is a creation of a later date than the birth of Co-operation. The introduction of the coal agent was not the creation of a new industry, but the separation of the producer and the consumer by a third party who made it his business to ease in some way the accelerated pace of life by relieving it of a few of the cares and anxieties to which it had been previously accustomed.

Formerly a householder requiring a load of coals would have to seek out some farmer or greengrocer or anyone prepared to do a little carrying trade and send him direct to the colliery for the article which he wanted. The carrier had nothing whatever to do with the price of the coals which he carried. He was simply paid for carrying them, and the delivery note from the colliery was handed over to the purchaser.

The increase in the consumption of coal made it necessary to secure supplies from other fields, and this increased the difficulties of the ordinary householder, who could not very conveniently send the carrier to other parts of Lancashire or to Yorkshire for his usual load of coals. This was a golden opportunity for the agent or middleman, and he took it. Not only had he control over all outside supplies, but soon he acquired the control of local supplies also.

This necessitated action on the part of the Co-operative Society in order to protect its members. So in 1882 it was decided to open a Coal Depôt at Clegg Street Railway Station, which was then the centre of the coal agency trade. Since then coal stations have been opened at Werneth, 1894, and Hollinwood, 1899.

This department has several times proved itself to be of great advantage to the members. Almost periodically there are coal famines, the result of "corners" and syndicates, but the Co-operative Society has generally been able to stem the upward tendency in prices to any very serious extent locally. This, apart from the saving of the profits for the members, has

proved the movement to be of incalculable benefit to those for whose especial welfare it was originally established.

A further example of the change from country to town or city life and habits may be noticed in the developments of the coal trade. The loads of coal for domestic use are decreasing with great rapidity, whilst the more convenient form of bags is surely taking their place. For the year ending 1892 the Society sold about 9,000 tons of coal. This was twelve months prior to retailing the coal in bags. Last year about 3,300 tons were sold in loads, whilst 860,000 bags were sold, representing 43,000 tons in weight. The coal receipts for the year amounted to £43,709. 7s. 5d.

One or two other details in connection with the central premises show the determination of those in authority to keep abreast of the times. In the year 1890 it was decided to put down a plant for the manufacture of electric light, and this form of illumination was first used in the Drapery Department on February 10th, 1891. It was afterwards extended to the Co-operative Hall and the Furnishing Department. When the Corporation supply was available an installation was put in the building, comprising the Offices, Grocery, Boot and Shoe, and Butchering Departments. In 1894 it was carried to the Tailoring Department, and this year electric power has been utilised to turn the sewing machines in this department.





CHAPTER XVIII.

A Bird's-eye View.

How fleet is a glance of the mind
Compared with the speed of its flight !
The tempest itself lags behind,
And the swift-wing'd arrows of light.

Cowper.

ONE of the attractions of Paris at the Exhibitions of 1878, 1889, and 1900 was a large balloon, which was constantly making air trips in order to give people an opportunity of getting a good bird's-eye view of the city. At the Exhibitions of 1889 and 1900 the far-famed Eiffel Tower served a similar purpose. Bird's-eye views are very popular and very useful. They convey a sense of vastness which could not be obtained by any other means. If there were an Eiffel Tower stretching its summit far above the roofs of the central premises, or if a balloon could be arranged to soar into the heavens and pause for a short time to enable the occupants to examine the objects below, not only would a good bird's-eye view of Oldham be secured, but a better idea would be obtained of the large area covered by the possessions of the King Street Co-operative Society.

Immediately beneath would be seen an extensive pile of magnificent buildings, comprising shops and workrooms for grocers, butchers, tailors, drapers, milliners, dressmakers, boot and shoe makers, hosiers, clothiers, bakers, and confectioners, together with offices, warehouses, engine-houses, boiler-houses, slaughter-houses, dwelling-houses, stables, &c. Truly it is a hive of industry. The pioneers were prophetic in their choice



PARK ROAD BRANCH STORES.



when they selected a representation of a beehive as a badge or coat of arms of the Society.

Notwithstanding the fact that depreciation has been allowed on a liberal scale, the fixed stock of the King Street premises stands on the balance sheet at £24,293.

Looking in the direction of the rising sun there is a wide field of Co-operative effort, but most of it is directed by the authorities of the Equitable Society. Taking the circle of the horizon, however, from this point, the view is not without interest.

First there is the branch at Yorkshire Street, a handsome building, but not to be compared to the next in order, which is situated at Park Road. Park Road sounds dignified, and naturally carries an air of superiority with it; so this branch is the most imposing of the lot. Then, sweeping round towards the south, there are three branches on the main road leading to Ashton-under-Lyne—these are Falcon Street, Ashton Road, and Hathershaw. Getting farther south, the eye covers Hollins, Chapel Road, Hollinwood, Turf Lane, Stanley Road, and Coppice. Following the circuit the group of Stores in the western division come into view. These are Butler Green, Werneth, Manchester Street, Cowhill, Middleton Junction, Middleton Road, Westwood, Westhill, and Garforth Street. Turning to the north, the Stores are still objects of interest. These are the Featherstall Road, Rochdale Road, Coldhurst, and Radcliffe Street branches. Thus, in addition to the extensive central buildings, there are twenty-four branches required to meet the wants of the 14,000 members. As far as possible the membership is limited to one in a family, so that if the moderate average is taken of four persons to one family it means that the Industrial Society caters for the necessities and comforts of 56,000 persons. To do this efficiently requires capital, care, and capacity.

The following are a few particulars relative to the present position of the Society:—

Number of Members.....	13,718.
Capital	£131,237. 13s. 8d.
Annual Sales	£473,878. 19s. 0½d.
Fixed Stock	£50,083. 16s. 8d.
Annual Depreciation.....	£3,735.
Saleable Stock	£49,228.
Capital Invested in Shares and Loans.....	£36,757.

Capital Lent to Members on Houses	£53,409.
Yearly Grant to Education	£2,400.
Number of Books in Libraries	20,780.
Number of Papers in Reading-rooms, one year's supply	11,185.
Total Number of Workpeople Employed...	461.
Number of Horses	38.
Number of Coal Wagons.....	30.
Number of Coal Lurries	22.
Other Conveyances	14.

An idea of the goods distributed annually may be gathered from the following sales of some of the chief articles:—

Flour	4,133 tons.	Tea	84,840 lbs.
Butter	625 tons.	Coffee	47,236 lbs.
Sugar.....	1,145 tons.	Tobacco	35,745 lbs.
Cheese	80 tons.		

The following table shows the progress of the Society in decades. The number of members for the year 1860 has, unfortunately, been unobtainable:—

Year.	No. of Members	Share Capital.			Cash Received for Goods.			Interest Paid for Shares.			Paid in Dividends.		
		£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
*1850.....	...	...			...			...			...
1860.....	...	8314	5	6½	43048	14	3	254	13	4	3297	19	11
1870.....	3090	56777	17	7½	118570	4	7½	2566	13	7	11210	4	11
1880.....	7132	75080	9	1	295533	13	1	3559	7	3	40606	4	10
1890.....	10441	101151	15	8	341195	6	1½	4847	16	6	49967	13	0
1900.....	13718	131237	13	8	473878	19	0½	5037	0	0	69569	0	0

* The Store started.

During the fifty years that the Society has been in existence the enormous sum of £10,614,980 has been received for goods, whilst the sum of £1,449,889 has been paid in dividends, and the sum of £141,046 in interest on share capital.





CHAPTER XIX.

Statutes and Limitations.

To see a good in evil and a hope
In ill-success : to sympathise, be proud
Of their half reasonings, faint aspirings, dim
Struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies,
Their prejudice and fears and cares and doubts,
All with a touch of nobleness.

Browning.

IT is said of some nations that in their most acceptable histories all mention of facts concerning their defeats or humiliation is carefully obliterated. These are not true histories. Neither would this be a true history if everything were painted in glowing colours without the faintest suspicion of a dark cloud anywhere. It may be taken for granted that things have been done which it were better had they been left undone. There have been bickerings and jealousies, but these are human weaknesses. To err is human, to forgive is divine. It is not necessary to dwell upon these unpleasant incidents, but if they were entirely omitted a grave charge might be made against this book of dealing with matters in a partial and, therefore, misleading manner. A man is not judged by his faults alone, but by a fair comparison of his faults and virtues. There are discreditable scenes, sometimes, even in the Mother of Parliaments, but people have not lost their faith in Parliament on that account.

Possibly the first note of difference which was sounded in the early stages of the Society was when it became a question of who should have the honour or the responsibility of having his name painted over the door as licensee of the shop. It was first decided that the position should be given to George Winterbottom, but afterwards, for some unexplained reason, William Marcroft was substituted for George Winterbottom. There was some little feeling displayed when the first Secretary refused to work with the same magnanimity as the Committee, and resigned his office rather than labour for what he considered inadequate pay. But these were of no lasting importance, and the little friction soon passed away.

Perhaps some of the bitterest differences arose, as they usually do, out of religion. The opening of the newsroom on Sundays provoked many warm discussions, and resulted sometimes in the decision of one meeting being reversed at the next. But the most dangerous manifestations of feeling were connected with labour questions. So far the Society has not allied itself in trade disputes with either masters or men, but the difficulties surrounding such a situation can be best appreciated by considering that the bulk of the members belong to the labouring class, and that in any dispute many of them will be directly interested, whilst most of the others will naturally be in the closest sympathy with them. An instance illustrating this occurred in 1875, when a conflict took place between capital and labour in the cotton trade. Local feeling ran very high, and as the Limited Companies, which had been accepted as embodying the Co-operative principle, were mostly ranged on the side of the capitalists, they encountered a good deal of opposition, and many were the efforts put forth in order to weaken them. On the plea that everything is fair in love and war, the operatives determined to cripple these companies, which they freely designated their enemies, by withdrawing the loan capital as far as possible which alone enabled such companies to live. But beyond the idea of attempting to weaken their antagonists' position they contended that they were doing an injustice to themselves by finding the capital with which the employers were fighting them. An agitation commenced and spread rapidly in favour of Co-operative Societies withdrawing their loan capital from such companies as were in the Masters' Association. A petition was drawn

up and numerous signed, calling upon the Committee of the Industrial Society to call a Special Meeting of members to consider the question. This was a serious matter for the Society, as it had a sum of about £45,000 invested as loan in the various spinning companies of the town. To withdraw it suddenly without any prospect of reinvesting it, and having to pay 5 per cent interest upon it to their members, meant a great loss to the Society.

The Committee called a Special Meeting, to be held at the close of the Monthly Meeting, to consider the requisition. The Co-operative Hall was densely packed, and large numbers were unable to gain admission. Great excitement prevailed, and the result was a turbulent meeting. Complaints were lodged that several people were present who were not shareholders, and the discussion turned more upon the point of share books *versus* check books than upon the question for which the meeting had been called. Eventually, in the midst of much dissatisfaction, the meeting was adjourned until the night following. The adjourned meeting was not so largely attended as the first one, and a very strange collapse took place. After a little feeling had been engendered on the question of whether or not the names of the requisitionists should be read to the meeting, the Chairman, Mr. Daniel Fennel, called upon one of them to open the business by means of a motion. The requisitionists stared at one another in blank bewilderment, and the meeting waited with thorough surprise. Nobody moved, and, after an awkward pause, the Chairman closed the business, and the meeting was at an end.

During this and other disputes which have occasioned widespread distress the Society has given liberally to alleviate such suffering as came within the area covered by its operations.

It is rather singular that the Jubilee year should see the continuation of a protracted strike of the Society's own tailors. The points in dispute arose early in 1899, but were submitted to arbitration before the close of the year. The arbitrators were selected from a Joint Committee appointed by the Co-operative Union and the Trades Congress. They consisted of two representative Trade Unionists and two Co-operators. Evidence was furnished by both disputants, and eventually the arbitrators gave an alternative award. The Co-operative Society accepted the alternative clause which adapted itself

best to the Society's requirements, but the tailors refused to comply, and the dispute at the time of writing is still in progress.

In the year 1890 a charge was made reflecting upon the honour of the Committee and officials of the Society, and a Committee was appointed to investigate the matter. A good deal of ill-feeling was created by the statements that official information had been disclosed and certain expenses paid which were not authorised by the rules of the Society. The Committee presented a report, which was printed and circulated; but when the report came before the members for consideration the whole subject, after a short discussion, suddenly collapsed.

Some time after this an agitation arose for the Society to be divided into electoral districts for the election of the various Committees. Much was said both for and against the proposal, and eventually, on October 9th, 1894, a Special Committee was appointed to frame a scheme of district representation. The problem was, however, so surrounded with difficulties that it was abandoned.

A spirit of opposition was still manifested to the method of electing the Committee, which resulted in the alteration of certain rules in May, 1895. One of these included the well-known time limit which has been adopted by several Co-operative Societies. The effect of this rule was to limit the service of a Committee-man to six years, after which an interval of two years was to elapse before he was eligible again. But before this restriction came into operation the rule was again amended, and the limitation removed at a Special Meeting held for the revision of rules on August 22nd, 1898. A clause was also adopted during this revision which declared that no one should occupy the position of President for more than two years in succession.

It is often contended that Co-operative Societies are purely democratic institutions—that is, that they are governed by the people for the people. In all such democratic institutions it is, therefore, perfectly natural that a good many of the people should want their fair share in the business of governing them. It is largely so in Co-operative Societies, and the Industrial Society is no exception to the general rule. At a General Quarterly Meeting, held January 1st, 1851, or six

days after the first shop was opened, the following resolution was passed :—"That no member of this Society be allowed to hold, at one time, more than one office."

It is probable that this instruction was honoured more by its breach than by its observance, for on May 15th, 1895, it was deemed advisable to insert a clause in the Registered Rules that no member of the Committee should hold more offices than one. Thus the old spirit of forty-four years ago was reaffirmed and made legal.





CHAPTER XX.

Education.

Slowly the Bible of the race is writ,
And not on paper leaves nor leaves of stone ;
Each age, each kindred adds a verse to it,
Texts of despair or hope, of joy or moan.
While swings the sea, while mists the mountains shroud,
While thunder's surges burst on cliffs of cloud,
Still at the prophet's feet the nations sit.

Lowell.

“**W**E GIVE these books for the founding of a college in this colony.” These were the words of ten ministers who in the year 1700 assembled at the village of Branford, a few miles east of Newhaven. Each of the worthy fathers deposited a few books upon the table around which they were sitting. Such was the founding of Yale College.

The Industrial Society's Educational Department had a simpler and even less pretentious origin than Yale College. Its existence is directly owing to a cheap trip. Excursions of all kinds have multiplied enormously since that time. The work of organising them has called into operation large business institutions which have agencies and branches all over the world. At the time of the first Store trip, however, Cook's excursions and tours had not even entered into the thoughts of man, whilst working people regarded a day's trip to Liverpool or Fleetwood as the event almost of a lifetime.

The responsibilities of the trip were not undertaken without due and serious consideration. A Special General Meeting of members was called for August 4th, 1858, at which it was resolved to run a cheap trip to Liverpool, the fare for the

Percival Watson.

Z. Nield.

Jos. Taylor.

C. E. Mayall.

A. Spencer (*Librarian*).



John S. Slack (*Vice-President*).

Joseph Farrer (*President*).

Robert Axon (*Secretary*).

double journey to be 1s. 7d. each. Fortunately the trip was a success, and £3 of the profits were voted towards establishing a library in connection with the Society.

Viewed in the light of modern events, the amount appears insignificant, but to those earnest and zealous educationalists it was the very essence of liberality itself. With such a munificent sum at their disposal they proceeded to active work. First they elected a "Library Committee" at a General Meeting held on September 8th, 1858. The members of the first Committee were—James Lord, William Marcroft, Henry Hewkin, James Lees, John Knott, and William Booth Lees. Some of these were also members of the General Committee, but there was no jealousy on that score. There was no question of dual offices, for, though the extra office entailed much additional work, there was no increased pay. These men were elected because they were practical men and understood the real value of education to working men. Libraries were greater luxuries at that period than they are to-day. Books were not so plentiful, nor were they so cheap. Very few books could be bought for the sum of £3, but, like the gift of books which led to the foundation of Yale College, it was a start. Then three of the Library Committee volunteered to canvass their friends and certain townsmen for the loan or gift of books to strengthen and enlarge the puny little stranger. To these three men is largely due whatever credit or honour attaches to the work which the Industrial Society has done for education.

William Marcroft, Henry Hewkin, and John Booth resolved that the lack of funds should not stand in the way of Co-operators taking up the cause of education. They were successful in obtaining about eighty volumes by their efforts, and it was a proud day for them when, shortly afterwards, the members granted them the use of the Boardroom for the purpose of a newsroom and a circulating library. A few shelves were fixed. Mr. Thomas Greenhalgh, who afterwards became a President of the Society, was appointed first Librarian, and the nucleus of the present magnificent library was formed.

It is almost impossible, under the influence of present conditions, to do full justice to these worthy pioneers of education. When it is remembered that the vast network of schools—day

schools and night schools—with their elementary and secondary grades, with their science and art classes, with their technical instruction, has all been established within the last thirty years, the work which the Co-operators set out to do will appear all the greater by comparison. To be able to read and write in those days was considered a valuable and special accomplishment, and few men and fewer women could do it.

But one of the chief aims of the founders of Co-operation was not only to improve the social but the intellectual condition of the people. Their own want of education made them recognise its importance, and it stimulated them to put forth increased exertions to supply the deficiency in the future. So the offer of the Boardroom to be used as a library and news-room when not required by the Committee was joyfully accepted. It was but a small room, but it played a large part in the making of the Society and in the making of Oldham. Possibly, if the evidence could only be collected, it has played an important part in the making of England also. They were not only pioneers in Co-operation but they were pioneers in Free Education. There was this difference, however, between their system and the modern system. Theirs was free. The teachers not only taught, they inspired. They did not cram, they created an appetite and fed it.

It was an inspiration in itself to see those self-taught men nobly struggling with the difficulties which were constantly presenting themselves in an attempt to explain the mysteries of "Lennie's Grammar." At other times it would be a determination to master a problem contained in the popular "Young's Arithmetic," or perhaps it might be the more delicate task of training old as well as young hands the art of penmanship. Most of these men would probably have failed to pass an examination in the Seventh Standard to-day, but they never lost sight of the central idea that they were making men as well as scholars.

It is scarcely necessary to state that the classes, as a rule, were held on Sunday mornings. This practice gave rise to several stormy debates at the members' meetings, and occasioned many unfriendly criticisms amongst the public. But the classes went on. Their supporters were men of experience, who could not be diverted from what they held to be good and true by the wiles of those who only wished to see them fail.

Besides, they had what they considered tangible reasons for holding the classes on Sundays. It was the most convenient day for the scholars. It was the only day which the teachers had at liberty, for their time was largely occupied at other times by the business of the Society. Then it was the only day when the room might be said to be fully at liberty.

Still, there were repeated attempts to close the room, especially the newsroom, which was open in the afternoon on Sundays, and, in order to satisfy the objectors, the Educational Committee agreed to act in turns as roomkeepers. Seeing that the position was a purely honorary one, it shows what faith and what zeal they put into their work. But it was scarcely necessary to insist upon their attendance. They could not keep away. Where their treasure was there was their heart also.

It is both curious and instructive to turn to the old news-room rules. One was to the effect that no reader could keep possession of any paper or periodical more than ten minutes after it was wanted by another person. It was a common occurrence to see people waiting for the expiration of the allotted time, when they would gently remind the unfortunate reader that his "time was up." Then, though he was in the midst of an interesting paragraph, he was bound to capitulate. This shows what a boon a newspaper was at that time, and what a mighty change has taken place between then and now.

From time to time small grants were made in aid of the library and newsroom, but it was soon found desirable to make a continuous grant for educational purposes, and on October 28th, 1863, it was resolved to allow $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of the net profits to be devoted to education. Since that time the contributions to this fund have been characterised by their extreme liberality, the total amount exceeding £41,000. The small library of 80 volumes has grown until it has now reached 20,780 volumes. In 1894 the grant for education was increased to 4 per cent of the net profits. This being found too much, it was again fixed at $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in 1898. This soon proved insufficient, and it was increased in 1900 to $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. This is the highest grant given for education by any Co-operative Society in the world.

In the year 1866 the first branch newsroom was opened, and so appreciated were its benefits that soon each branch

desired a newsroom of its own. There are now twenty-one branch newsrooms, each of which contains, in addition to the usual list of papers, a small reference library. The total number of books in these libraries is 1,907, whilst in connection with the Central Reading-room there is a reference library containing 1,603 volumes.

The growth of educational work was such that it soon became advisable to have an Educational Committee, elected on the same basis as the General Committee, with full control over the educational funds. On April 4th, 1866, it was resolved that such a Committee be appointed, to consist of five members, one of whom must retire at each Quarterly Meeting. The salary was to be ten shillings each per quarter. The first Committee were Wright Chadderton, Henry Hewkin, William Parker, John Cheetham, and Francis Chadderton.

In the year 1870 the Educational Committee determined to include music in their curriculum, and decided to give a series of free concerts and lectures to the members. This proved to be a most popular departure, as the number of people attending the concerts could only be restrained by the capacity of the room. This led to complaints from those who were unfortunate in securing admission, and ultimately a small charge was made so as to regulate the attendance. Recently another attempt has been made to provide free concerts, the object being to secure an audience to listen to addresses on Co-operation that were sandwiched between the musical parts of the programme. Again, however, the rush for tickets of admission resulted in such disagreeable scenes that the Committee were compelled to charge a small fee as the condition of admission to these concerts.

The lectures arranged by the department have had a somewhat chequered, if interesting, career. For a time the attendance was considered satisfactory, but gradually the interest decreased and the audiences diminished until the introduction of the University Extension Lectures in 1886. These lectures marked an extraordinary epoch in the history of Co-operative education in Oldham. The courses have run for a period of fourteen years, and during the whole of that time the interest and attention have been of a remarkable character, whilst the success of the students has carried the fame of Oldham throughout the movement.

Fifteen courses of lectures under the auspices of the Oxford University Extension Delegacy, and one under the Victoria University Delegacy, have been given in connection with the Educational Department at a cost to the Society of upwards of £900.

On the 13th of July, 1886, the members empowered the Educational Committee to commence science classes, on the understanding that such classes should not be set up as competitors of the classes held at such institutions as the Lyceum, the Science and Art Schools, and the Mechanics' Institution. In conformity with this resolution classes were established for the study of Cotton Manufacture, Botany, Physiology, Book-keeping, Shorthand, Dressmaking, &c. The classes were very successful, and almost self-supporting, but in consequence of the advantages offered by the municipality, under the Technical Education Act, it was resolved by the Quarterly Meeting of April 10th, 1894, to discontinue them.

But the Educational Committee have not only provided means for the mental culture of adults; they have for over twenty years supplied an annual series of lecture entertainments for the children. That these are widely appreciated may be judged from their ever-growing popularity. The number of children annually attending these entertainments is about 8,000.

In 1884 a sad calamity occurred at one of these gatherings. On the 22nd of February a magic lantern entertainment was being given in the Chadderton Town Hall when the gas bag exploded, doing great damage to life and property. One little boy was killed and several were seriously injured.

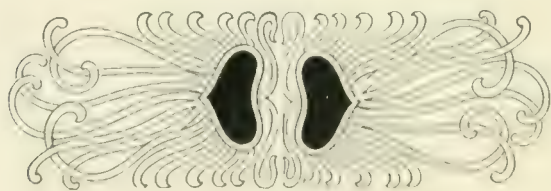
The only important public event in connection with the Educational Department took place on Saturday, March 17th, 1888, when the Hon. Edward Lyulph Stanley reopened the Central Newsroom in Foundry Street, after very extensive alterations. One of the most interesting features in connection with the occasion was the provision of a separate room for the first time for the purpose of a ladies' newsroom. The ceremony was attended with the usual formalities, though the number of members present was but small, owing, no doubt, to the wretched weather which prevailed. Mr. W. H. Crowther, the Chairman of the Educational Committee, presented to Mr. Stanley a handsome key, which had been specially

designed by Messrs. Elkington, of Manchester. On one side of the key there was engraved the Oldham Coat of Arms and a Beehive, which is the emblem of the Society. On the other side was the following inscription:—"Oldham Industrial Co-operative Society Limited. Presented to the Hon. E. L. Stanley on the occasion of his Opening the Libraries and Reading-rooms, King Street, March 17th, 1888."

Mr. Stanley, in opening the premises, expressed the pleasure it gave him to be present, and he congratulated the members upon the possession of their enlarged and improved premises. Oldham people, he said, were proud of many things in connection with the town, but there was nothing they could rightly be more proud of than of such an institution as that, built up as it was by the co-operative liberality of the working classes of the town.

Mr. Alderman Emmott followed, and congratulated them heartily upon taking possession of those premises, which he had no doubt would be a great benefit to the members of the Society.

The Mayor (Mr. Alderman S. R. Platt), Mr. F. Hardern, the President of the Society, and others took part in the day's proceedings. It is interesting to note that, whilst Mr. Stanley formerly represented the borough in Parliament, Mr. Emmott was elected one of its representatives in 1899, and again in 1900.





COLDHURST BRANCH STORES.



CHAPTER XXI.

Cottage Building.

The merry homes of England !
Around their hearths by night,
What gladsome looks of household love
Meet in the ruddy light !

* * *

The cottage homes of England !
By thousands on her plains,
They are smiling o'er the silvery brooks,
And round the hamlet fanes.

Mrs. Hemans.

ONE of the questions which are occupying the attention of many statesmen, philanthropists, and public organisations is that of the housing of the people. Large-hearted benefactors like Peabody and Ruskin have thrown themselves and their fortunes into the apparently interminable flood of effort to do something worthy of the citizens of a great and professedly Christian country. How little has been done can only be realised by a glance at the slums of our great cities and towns. Here and there, perhaps, old and insanitary property has been condemned and destroyed, but in some cases the people thus turned into the streets have not had elsewhere to go. The result has been the greater overcrowding of other slum districts, or, possibly, the creation of new slums. Slum people are not necessarily improved by the destruction of their homes. Their surroundings must not only be made brighter but their purpose in life must be lifted to a higher plane.

Long before this question of building cottages for the people was made the sport of politicians and the happy hunting ground of the professional agitator many of the Co-operative Societies attempted in their own quiet but practical way to solve the intricate problem. Like many other great and beneficial movements, it grew out of another reform. It has already been pointed out that as confidence in the Society grew the capital placed at its disposal increased beyond all possible requirements. It was felt that, for the time, the Society had gone as far as it was prudent to go in the direction of investing its surplus capital in the Limited Liability Companies of the town, and it was suggested that a part of the money might be lent to their own members to enable them to build or purchase their own houses. Messrs. William Marcroft, Henry Hewkin, and others threw the whole weight of their influence in favour of the project, and worked ardently to put the scheme in working order.

The first grant for cottage building purposes was voted on April 28th, 1869, the amount being £5,000. This new policy created quite a stir in the town. Here were a number of working men actually talking about building houses for themselves. What would they talk about next? Perhaps they would be dreaming of having "parlours" and pianos before long. How many of the cynics have lived to see that dream realised? It would be interesting to know how many Co-operators to-day have a "parlour" and a piano.

The £5,000 was borrowed for "cottage building" by the members. It is curious to observe how the word "cottage" ultimately dropped out of the description of these grants. It is a notable object lesson in showing what Co-operation can do for people. In the short space of a few years there were people who formerly had nothing but liabilities and responsibilities which they could call their own, but were now building cottages for themselves. They borrowed the money from the Store, for which they paid 5 per cent per annum interest, and the rate of repayment was so adjusted as to make the burden easy. It was a good thing for the Society, because it utilised a portion of the capital which was lying idle at the bank; and it was a good thing for the building member, because it furnished an impetus to thrift and economy such as he had never experienced before.

The natural result was that other members desired to build, and a second grant of £5,000 was voted on January 19th, 1870. Outsiders were astounded. What! £10,000 for building cottages in less than twelve months! It was considered suicidal. There would be a glut in the market of cottages, and the Society would inevitably be ruined. Instead of that, however, a third grant was made on April 19th, 1871. There were no signs of bankruptcy yet. As for the folly which was supposed to characterise people who erected a cottage without any special knowledge of the building trade, the difficulty was met by the appointment of a separate Building Committee, whose duty it was to advise and assist the inexperienced builder to the utmost extent in their power.

There was yet another grant of £5,000 made in 1874, but in 1876 there were two grants amounting to £15,000. Still there were no signs of insolvency. In 1881 the sum of £10,000 was voted for this purpose, but the scheme had now such an air of security and permanency about it that it began to be taken as a matter of course. Two more grants of £5,000 each were made in 1883 and 1884, and then during the succeeding twelve years no less than £90,000 was voted in separate grants of £10,000 each. The total amount lent up to this time was £156,579.

In 1896 the Building Committee was abolished, and the duties appertaining to the department were incorporated with those of the Committee of Management. The interest charged was also reduced from 5 to 4 per cent per annum. From that period up to September, 1899, a further sum of £47,172 was advanced to members wherewith to build or purchase property. The original condition of one cottage only to one member has been removed, and a member may now, if the Committee is satisfied as to the value thereof, borrow a sum of £300 with which he may build or purchase one or more houses, or he may build or purchase one of that value which will probably contain a suitable "parlour" for the accommodation of the Co-operative piano.

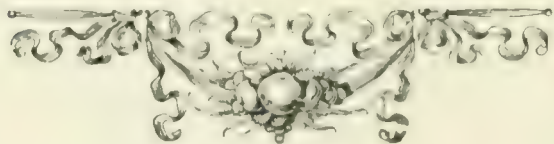
At the end of September, 1899, the total sum advanced by the Society to members for building purposes was £203,751. The number of houses thus purchased or built was 1,324, the average value being £154 per house. Out of the amount lent the sum of £154,056 has been repaid, leaving the balance on

loan £49,695. The figures of 1899 have been selected so as to compare them with the returns tabulated by the Co-operative Union.

The returns alluded to are the first of their kind presented to Congress, and are especially interesting as showing the work done by the Industrial Society in its relation to the work done by the whole of the Societies in the Co-operative movement.

Dealing only with Societies which build houses to sell to their members, and Societies which lend money to their members wherewith to build or buy houses, we get the following results:—Money advanced, under both heads, by Societies in all the Sections, £4,230,129. Out of this the North-Western Section's share is £2,878,093, or about 68 per cent of the total.

Comparing the Oldham Industrial Society with the rest of the North-Western Section it stands thus:—Loans of all the Societies in the Section, £2,878,093; Loans by the Oldham Industrial Society, £206,570, or about 7 per cent of the whole. As the Society's members only number about 2 per cent of the total number of members in the Section, it will be seen that it has done more than its share of the work of housing the people. The following figures indicate the Society's work up to September, 1900:—Amount lent, £219,883; amount repaid, £166,474; number of houses built or bought, 1,437; average cost, £153.





CHAPTER XXII.

Products of Energy :

THE PENNY BANK. THE SUN MILL.
THE CO-OPERATIVE WHOLESALE SOCIETY.
THE STAR CORN MILL.

Look forward, not back. 'Tis the chant of creation ;
The chime of the seasons as onward they roll ;
'Tis the pulse of the world, 'tis the hope of the ages,
'Tis the voice of our God in the depths of the soul.

THE motto, the hope, and the inspiration of the early Co-operators was "Forward." With a true Alexandrian spirit they were ever seeking for some new world to conquer, some fresh difficulty to overcome. The man of energy is not content to rest on the first foothold attained, he must mount another niche higher. This indomitable "Go" is the secret of the progress of the world. So the Co-operators were not disposed to rest satisfied with the success achieved at the Store.

They recognised that if the principles for the propagation of which they were spending the best years of their lives were to be perpetuated they must be deeply impressed on the minds of the young. So they began to teach not only what are supposed to be the rudiments of education, but the elements of character. They engrafted in the minds of the youth the noble virtues of self-culture, self-reliance, self-respect. A combination of these qualities will enable a man to face all difficulties, overcome all obstacles, and achieve that success from which true greatness, comfort, and happiness are derived.

So while the educational struggles were proceeding it was suggested by Mr. Marcroft that they should do something to enlist the sympathies of the children in the Co-operative movement. Education would do much, but it would not do all. As the twig is bent the tree will incline. They must incline the ears of the children to listen to the great aims, principles, and advantages of the movement. They must take hold of the young and train them in habits of thrift, of sobriety, and of manliness. He advocated the establishment of a Penny Bank. There was no such institution, as far as his knowledge went, in connection with any Co-operative Store, but he had heard of a very successful Penny Bank being in operation in Yorkshire. He believed in the old adage which said, "Take care of the pence and the pounds will take care of themselves." The subject was laid before the members at a meeting held November 24th, 1859, when it was decided to call a Special General Meeting "for the purpose of establishing a Penny Bank for young persons under twenty-one years of age." The proposal met with some formidable opposition amongst the members, and received a good deal of ridicule at the hands of the public and of the public press. But they had grown accustomed to this treatment. The Special Meeting was held on December 7th, 1859, and it was resolved "to form a bank for the purpose of receiving small deposits." A Committee to devise a scheme and report thereon was appointed, consisting of Wm. Marcroft, Thos. Winterbottom, Jas. Wood, Abraham Marsden, and Samuel Ogden Ward. Mr. S. O. Ward was selected as Secretary to the Committee, which set energetically to work. The only place where they knew of such a bank being in existence was Leeds, so a deputation visited that town to collect the necessary information. Early in the year 1860 the bank commenced. It has the honour of being the first Penny Bank known in the Co-operative movement. It was open to the youth of the general public with a view of imbuing them with the beauty and justice of Co-operative principles. That it has succeeded beyond all anticipations, and been copied largely by other Societies in other towns, is too well known to need recapitulating.

The Penny Bank was the forerunner of the Post Office Savings Bank, which only commenced in 1863, just as the

Society's classes were the precursor of Free Education. There has been a steady growth of depositors and deposits until there are now 14,000 depositors, whilst the amount of their deposits reaches £25,127. 13s. 6½d.

The Sun Mill.

The Educational Committee are adopting a wise course in adorning the walls of their Central Rooms with works of art. Beautiful pictures have been too long the exclusive property of the wealthier classes; but Co-operators, whose combined capital is counted by millions sterling, can afford to buy pictures wherewith to refine the tastes and raise the aspirations of their fellow-men. Amongst the pictures on the walls there is none more remarkable than the photograph of three men who have made a name for themselves in Oldham, and have left their "footprints on the sands of Time." The three men who are thus honoured, and are entitled to honour, were William Marcroft, James Lees, and James Lord.

The picture represents a Subscription Night in connection with the Sun Mill Company. The business was transacted in a spare room at the Store. Mr. Lees and Mr. Lord are sat at a tub, which, being set on its end, is made to do duty as a table. Mr. Marcroft is stood at the table, or tub, paying his share contributions towards the now famous Sun Mill. It was a small beginning—insignificant, some people would think—but the men who had it in hand were known to be men who would see it through. They had started the Store with quite as gloomy prospects and had succeeded; why should they not succeed now?

The Company was registered on the 13th January, 1858, as the Oldham Building and Manufacturing Company Limited, and commenced business on a moderate scale in what is known as "Chadwick's Factory," on Featherstall Road. Never did men work harder to float a Company than did the Directors of this Company to get sufficient shares taken up to build the Sun Mill. They went on canvassing expeditions, they wrote and distributed literature, they arranged and addressed meetings in Oldham and elsewhere, and at last succeeded in raising sufficient capital and promises to warrant them in commencing building operations. It was a bold stroke. Some people said

it was a mad enterprise—but it went on. The writer of this History was present when the corner-stone of the Sun Mill was laid by Dr. John Watts, of Manchester, on Saturday, May 4th, 1861. Mr. H. Hewkin presided over the gathering, and Mr. Marcroft and others subsequently addressed the assembly.

The Company practically owed its existence to the Industrial Society, which took up shares to the value of £1,500, afterwards increasing it to £3,000. Its career has been a chequered one, the shares realising at one period over 100 per cent premium, whilst at another they have failed to reach 90 per cent discount.

The Store has at the present time about £1,500 invested in shares in two other Cotton Spinning Companies.

The English Co-operative Wholesale Society

is another gigantic institution which owes much of its origin to the King Street Store. There are many contentious claims to the honour of initiating this wide development of Co-operation. Without depreciating the claims of any other Society, it may be fairly stated that the Oldham Industrial did its full share of work in connection with the early stages of its establishment. As is well known, the old farm at Jumbo played an important part in the preliminary stages, and several members of the King Street Store attended the meetings held there.

Mr. Holyoake says, in his "History of Co-operation":—

A mile and a half or more from Oldham, in a low-lying, uncheerful spot, there existed twenty years ago a ramshackle building known as Jumbo Farm. A shrewd Co-operator who held it, Mr. Booth,* had observed in the Shudehill Market, Manchester, that it was great stupidity for five or six buyers of Co-operative Stores to meet there and buy against each other and put up prices, and he invited a number of them, and others, to meet at Jumbo Farm on Sundays and discuss the Wholesale idea; and on Saturday nights at the Oldham Store at King Street a curious visitor might have observed a solid and ponderous load of succulent joints well accompanied, a stout cheese being conspicuous, for Sunday consumption during the Wholesale discussion; for the hearty Co-operators at Jumbo had appetites as well as ideas. There were, and still are, two great Stores in Oldham—Greenacres and King Street. Greenacres has never carried out Sunday gatherings on any occasion. King Street has done so for over twenty-five years, and many of their best and most successful projects have first been talked of at these Sunday meetings.

* Mr. Holyoake probably means Mr. Boothman.

The *Oldham Chronicle* of August 18th, 1860, gives a report of a tea party held on August 12th, from which a few sentences are taken :—

A number of the Co-operators of Oldham and the neighbourhood visited the Jumbo Farm on Sunday, and there met Mr. John Cooper, of Rochdale, who has made great efforts to spread the system of Co-operation. Tables and seats were arranged in the barn, and tea was served up in capital style. After the repast the chair was occupied by the President of the King Street Store, who opened the proceedings with a few appropriate remarks. Mr. John Cooper next addressed the meeting.

A number of meetings were held at different places to discuss the legal difficulties which stood in the way of Co-operative Societies combining together to establish a wholesale dépôt. The obstacle was removed by a Bill which was piloted through the House of Commons by Mr. J. S. Estcourt, M.P., and which received the Royal Assent on August 7th, 1862.

Following this a Conference of Co-operators was held on Christmas Day, 1862, on the premises of the Oldham Industrial Society, at King Street. The Conference was largely attended by representatives from the various Societies in the North of England, the appointed delegates from the Industrial Society being Messrs. Isaiah Lee and James Hilton.

The *Co-operator* for February, 1863, gives a lengthy report of this meeting, and from it the following extracts are taken :—

CONFERENCE AT OLDHAM.

On Christmas Day numerous delegates met in conference in the lecture-room at the Oldham Stores. Mr. Abraham Greenwood, of Rochdale, presided. Mr. Cooper, the Secretary, read the report, which recorded the steps taken in the support of the amended Act of 1862. Co-operators cannot be too grateful to the Conference Committee, the Members of Parliament, and other friends who carried this Bill. Thanks were voted to Lord Portman, the Right Hon. T. H. S. Estcourt, M.P., John Bright, Esq., M.P., E. V. Neale, Esq., &c.

The delegates discussed several matters, including the formation of a Co-operative Insurance Company, after which they adjourned for dinner.

The afternoon was almost wholly devoted to reading and discussing a paper by the Chairman on the propriety of establishing a central dépôt, or wholesale agency. The discussion resulted in the following resolution being agreed to :—

“That in the opinion of this meeting it is desirable that we establish a wholesale depôt or agency.”

A Committee will be formed to collect information on the subject, and prepare a prospectus of the scheme, to be submitted to a future meeting. The Conference broke up about half-past six, having sat six hours.

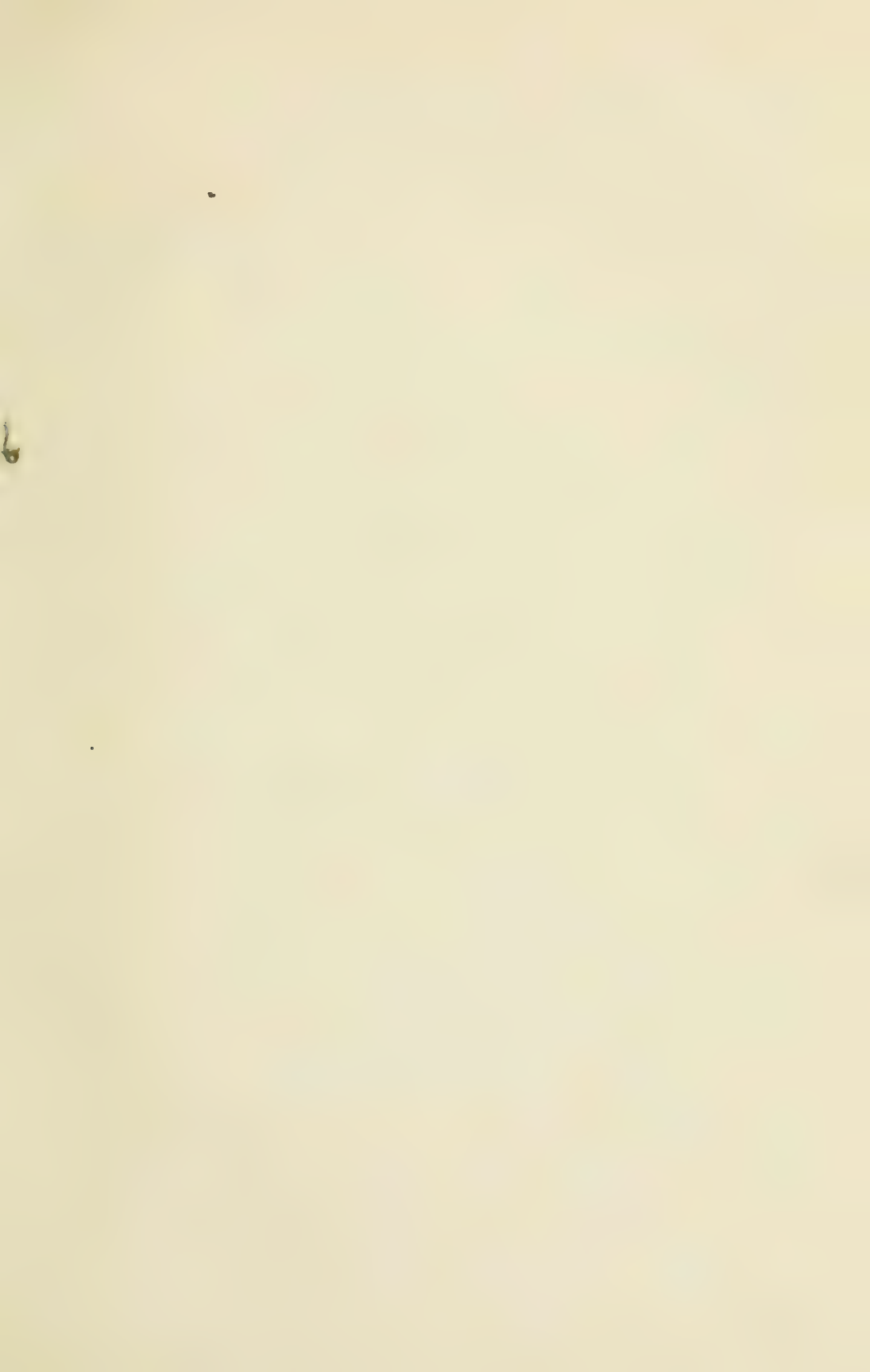
Considered in the light of present Conferences, it seems almost like a romance to read of these gatherings being sufficiently attractive to retain the interest and attention of delegates for six hours.

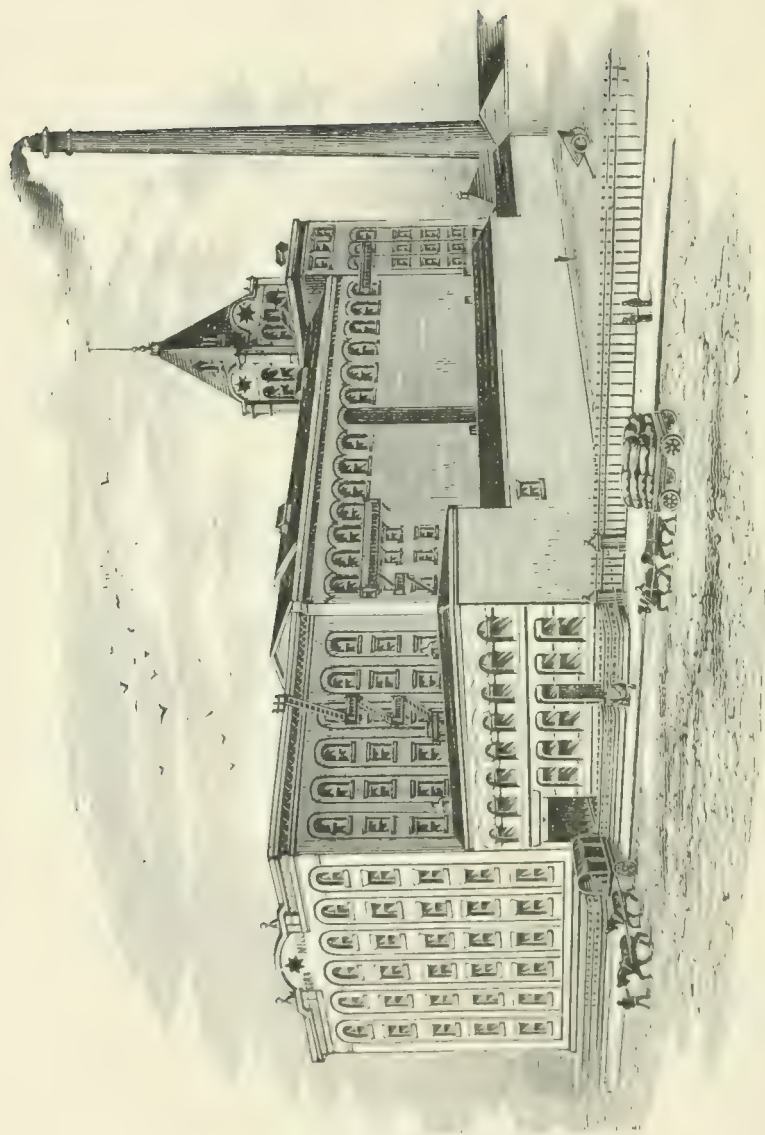
The next Conference which met to consider the Wholesale question was held in the Public Hall, Kirby Street, Canal Street, Great Ancoats, Manchester, on Good Friday, April 3rd, 1863. The business commenced at ten o'clock in the forenoon, and, excepting a short interval for dinner, continued until eight o'clock in the evening. Messrs. Lee and Hilton again represented the Industrial Society.

Writing to the *Oldham Chronicle* on June 26th, 1895, the late Mr. E. Ingham said that one of the first, if not the very first, meetings for the formation of the Co-operative Wholesale Society was actually held in a barn at Jumbo, at which Messrs. W. Marcroft, H. Hewkin, J. Barber, and he were present.

The meeting was held in the barn so that their wives, who were also present, could assist the good lady in the adjoining farmhouse to get tea ready for them. He remembered Mr. Marcroft saying at that early meeting that “Co-operators must not rest until they had their own ships bringing the produce of other lands direct from the producer to the consumer, thereby saving to themselves the profits of the middlemen.” Several meetings in different parts of the country followed, with the result that the English Co-operative Wholesale Society became a real business establishment on March 14th, 1864, its premises being situate in Cooper Street, Manchester.

The following members of the Industrial Society have served on the directorate of the Wholesale Society: Isaiah Lee, from November, 1867, to November, 1868; William Marcroft, from May, 1869, to May, 1871; John F. Brearley, from February, 1874, to December, 1874; and James Hilton, from September, 1884, to January, 1890.





THE STAR CORN MILL.

The Star Corn Mill.

Having now completed a system of wholesale and retail trade in the distribution of goods, the next question that naturally arose was the production of goods. The first article that suggested itself to their minds was flour. Everybody used flour. Besides, Rochdale had a corn mill, and Leeds had a corn mill. Why should not Oldham have a corn mill? The subject was seriously discussed at the General Meetings of members; joint meetings of representatives of both Oldham Societies were held, and eventually it was decided that a corn mill should be erected in Oldham.

A site was selected on the bank of the little streamlet Medlock, already alluded to as "Sheepwashes Brook." It was not the first attempt that had been made in that locality to improve the condition of the working classes. The immediate neighbourhood was widely known as the scene of a worthy effort to mitigate the distress of the spinners of Oldham. Land was rented, some of which was turned into gardens to find work for unemployed spinners, whilst other portions were arranged to suit the public demands for outdoor pleasures and recreation. The district was long known, and is sometimes referred to yet, as the Spinners' Gardens. Following the rippling stream a little further that part of the valley is reached which was taken by the Oldham Corporation in order to find work for people whose means of livelihood had been crippled by the American Civil War. This plot of land is now the Alexandra Park, which was opened on August 28th, 1865.

The Co-operative Societies in the neighbourhood of Oldham and Manchester were invited to take up shares in the proposed Corn Mill Company, whilst individuals were also admitted as shareholders. Although the inclusion of private shareholders might, at that time, have been necessary, the wisdom of the policy has often been doubted since.

The originators of the Star Corn Mill were chiefly members of the Oldham Industrial and Oldham Equitable Societies, and it was the first undertaking in which these two Societies combined. The original Committee consisted of an equal number from each Society. Rules were drawn up, and the signing of the same is not without a touch of humour. The

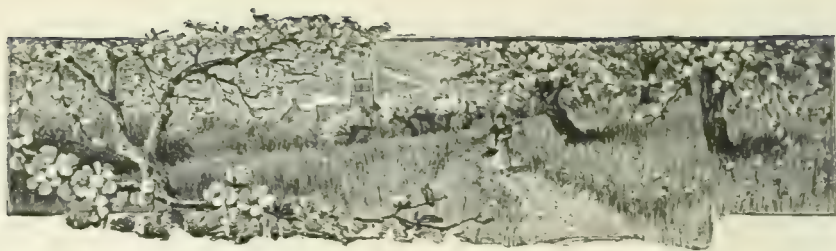
Committee assembled on the banks of the Sheepwashes Brook, where the rules were read and approved. The next thing to do was to sign them; but no table was at hand. One of the members, John Hilditch, a broad-backed fellow, was not to be foiled, and exclaimed, "Mak' my back into a table," and the important document was signed on the back of a man. Immediately afterwards operations commenced, and Mr. John Wild, architect, was called in to prepare plans for a mill, which was erected in 1869, and fitted up with a system of stone grinding. The business continued to increase, and, the goods produced giving satisfaction, in the year 1875 it was found necessary to increase the producing power and enlarge the storage accommodation for grain. This extension enabled the Committee to manufacture the best quality of flour on a more extensive scale, and have ample power reserved.

A serious calamity overtook the Society on the evening of Thursday, November 28th, 1889, when the mill and warehouse were totally destroyed by fire. At the time the alarm of fire was given the Committee were holding their usual meeting, and had just passed a resolution to close the mill on the following Saturday for the funeral of the Manager, Mr. John Hurt. The mill flag was hoisted at half-mast, and was at half-mast until it fell with the roof. Mr. John Hurt was the first Manager of the mill, which he started on September 21st, 1870. A General Meeting of members was held on March 8th, 1890, when it was decided to erect a new mill on the most modern principles. This mill, the corner-stone of which was laid by the late Chairman, Mr. James Lownds, on July 3rd, 1890, was opened with befitting ceremony on October 21st, 1891. Mr. Lownds set the machinery in motion and presided over the subsequent proceedings. The new mill found itself encumbered with a considerable adverse balance consequent upon the fire and upon a somewhat unfavourable market.

Throughout the difficulties the shareholding Societies, and particularly the Oldham Industrial, have been loyal supporters of the mill, which is now in the happy position of having cleared off since 1891 its incubus of £7,231, besides paying £28,000 in share and loan interest. Upwards of £4,000 have been paid in dividends, £1,400 have been put aside as a Reserve Fund, and the Ship Canal Shares have been depreciated by £1,400.

The mill has the reputation of being one of the most successful of Co-operative Corn Mills. The Industrial Society is largely interested in the results of the business of the mill, as its investments in share capital amount to £10,125. The total capital of the Star Corn Millers' Society is £66,672, of which £52,000 is share and £14,672 is loan capital. Its Fixed Stock stands at £31,852, and its yearly trade is about £213,000.





CHAPTER XXIII.

Pro Bono Publico.

Live not for thyself alone!
Know that God made all men brothers;
Therefore let thy deeds be done
Ever for the good of others.

ONE of the commonest and one of the most unfounded charges brought against the Co-operative movement by its enemies is that it is based upon selfishness. It would be idle to deny that every man has more or less of selfishness in his nature. It is a part of humanity. Nature has established a law the basis of which is the survival of the fittest. Christianity, civilisation, and Co-operation have said, "As far as possible let us make everyone fit to survive."

The desire to aid in this noble work has prompted Co-operators, in all parts of the world where Co-operation is known, to associate themselves with any other organisations which have for their object the moral and material welfare and happiness of man.

It is this worthy desire which has inspired Co-operators in the past, and in the present, to enter public life and take upon themselves public duties and responsibilities. It was the whispering of this still small voice which suggested, in bygone years, that there were public duties which devolved upon Co-operation by reason of its power and its influence in the towns and villages where it had taken root. A few historical references will be sufficient to establish the claim of the Oldham Industrial Society that it has ever recognised its obligations in this direction.

It has already been pointed out that the Society acknowledged its educational responsibilities and seriously and successfully endeavoured to discharge them at a time when educational facilities were rare and voluntary. It should also be mentioned that all its exceptional advantages, with the exception of its circulating library, are open to the public. Whilst retaining the right to expel any non-member from any one of the Society's newsrooms, it is well understood that, where cleanliness and good order are observed, no obstacle to the enjoyment of the benefits thereof shall be offered.

When the classes were in operation they were all open, at a slightly different fee, to the public. In the attendance at lectures and concerts provided by the Society so profusely every season there is and has been no difference made between members and non-members.

Besides this, the members have admitted their public obligations in various ways. Simultaneously with their decision to devote a part of their profits to education, they resolved to make a grant of £5 towards the erection of a public fountain which should occupy some convenient site in the town to which they were proud to belong. It was not to be expected that a very elaborate monument could be purchased for this sum, but from the standpoint of the donors it was considered a handsome contribution. Evidently the Town Council feared that the amount would be inadequate, for the proposal was not accepted with that alacrity which the donors had anticipated. It was suggested that the £5 should be increased to £7. 10s. by public subscription, and the Watch Committee was asked if the Town Council would erect the fountain if the material was provided. This invitation was declined, and the Society mustered sufficient courage to disregard the cost, and pass, on November 22nd, 1858, three definite resolutions:—

That we purchase a first-rate granite fountain, to be placed in the Market Place adjoining the Big Lamp.

That the inscription on the fountain be as follows:—"Presented by the King Street Co-operative Society, 1858."

That a child's head be on the fountain.

The last resolution reads somewhat barbarously, but it must not be taken too literally. Co-operators, as a rule, are kind to little children.

Ultimately the Corporation agreed to accept the fountain, and promised to keep it in good repair and supply the water free of cost.

Mr. Howard, architect, designed the fountain, and stated that the cost would be £15. When this became known, several members of the Committee of Management opposed the expenditure of such an amount of money, and endeavoured to prevent the thing going forward, and steps were even to be taken to rescind the resolution. A delay of several weeks was caused, but, in the meantime, information getting about that the project was likely to be given up, a few working men employed at the Lowermoor Ironworks of Messrs. Wolstenhulme and Rye resolved to form themselves into a Committee for the purpose of carrying out a similar undertaking. This coming to the knowledge of the members of the King Street Co-operative Society, a few of them took it upon themselves to interview the Committee of Management respecting the drinking fountain. The Committee persisted in their opposition to incurring such a cost at the Society's expense. At the close of the interview the deputation told the Committee that if they did not decide to go on with the erection of the fountain they would take up the matter at once. The result was that the Committee did decide to go on with the work. But where was the granite fountain? No one seemed to know anything about it. Search was made in almost every part of the premises, and in the long run it was found amongst a stock of cheese covered with straw.

The day fixed for the opening was April 9th, 1859. Mr. R. W. Duxbury, who was then the temperance missionary in Oldham, promised to bring his Band of Hope children to fittingly signalise the event. A procession was formed in King Street, being headed by members of the Committee and the Society. On arriving in the Market Place special hymns were sung, the chorus of one being appropriate to the occasion:—

Fill the Market Fountain,
Bubbling from the spring,
Pure as crystal water,
Health and comfort bring.

The Chairman of the Society, Mr. James Lord, presided over the proceedings and performed the public ceremony,

whilst the Corporation was represented by the Mayor (Mr. George Barlow) and the Town Clerk (Mr. Summerscales), and such prominent Co-operators as Mr. Marcroft, Mr. Hewkin, and others were present. Unhappily for the children the day was wet, and, singular to state, whilst they were singing "Fill the Market Fountain" the rain came down in torrents, causing many of them to make speedy tracks towards home, and thus forget the buns to which they had been looking forward with longing hearts. On the front of the fountain is to be seen the following inscription:—1859. Presented by the King Street Co-operative Society." On the back are the words, "Dog Fountain," so that both man and beast might learn that they were respectively provided for. It may be stated that at the time the fountain was erected the Old Market Place was filled with stalls, and on a Saturday night presented very much the appearance of a fair. Many of those who witnessed or participated in the opening ceremony would, no doubt, be somewhat astonished, could they revisit the scenes of their early triumphs, to find that the object which had cost so much money and trouble and anxiety had transferred its abiding place to a spot which, in their young days, formed part of a verdant bank of a fresh flowing stream, where sheep were wont to be washed. It has been deposed by a more elaborate and a more costly structure which has been erected by a new generation of Co-operators. Isolated and rejected of men, it now stands in front of the Park gates, where its feeble and flickering light reflects only the glories and the vicissitudes of the past. It is a remarkable monument of the progress of the age, showing with what rapidity the old order changeth and giveth place to the new. The Society which called it into existence has gone on from conquest to conquest, and the little ones who wore medals and ate buns in honour of the opening of the old fountain are now controlling the institution which has raised, and is raising, the standard of citizenship in the community.

The new fountain was erected in commemoration of the Queen's Jubilee at a cost of £250, and was unveiled by Mr. Frank Hardern, President of the Society, on Saturday, January 21st, 1888. Following the example of 1859, there was a procession of officials, Committee-men, and members of the Society to celebrate the event. Again the Mayor and the Town

Clerk were there to receive the gift, but it was noticed that it was not the same Mayor nor the same Town Clerk. Again it rained in torrents, and the speakers were under the necessity of addressing their remarks to a conspicuous crowd of umbrellas. The Mayor, Mr. J. W. Radcliffe, said that

The Co-operative movement was one of the most marvellous movements in the town. If there had not been good in it it could not have taken the deep root it had done. It was a very valuable trait in the character of the members of that Society that they did not believe in keeping all the profits to themselves, but were always ready to help their fellow-citizens.

Another gratifying feature is the Society's constant support of public philanthropic institutions. The first step in this direction was taken in 1871, when it was decided to contribute £100 from the general fund towards the building of the Oldham Infirmary and £45 from the Educational Fund towards the scheme for endowment. Since that time the amount annually subscribed in this manner has largely increased. Amongst the recipients are the Oldham and Manchester Infirmaries, Buxton and Southport Hospitals, Manchester Eye Institution, and the Oldham Deaf and Dumb Institute. The grant of 120 guineas per annum to the Oldham Infirmary is the largest to any one institution. For the Jubilee Year, 1887, this grant was £210, and for the Co-operative Jubilee Year, 1900, a special donation of £500 is being given. The total contributions of the Society for what are termed charitable purposes amount up to the present to £5,659. 5s.

On the 18th of December, 1867, the Society received testimony of its efficacy from the lips of one of England's greatest statesmen. On that day the Right Honourable W. E. Gladstone paid a visit to the town to fulfil an engagement at the Werneth Mechanics' Institute. During his brief stay he was fully occupied in gleaning information upon almost every important topic. He went to the Sun Mill and was shown the process of cotton spinning, after which he paid a visit to the Stores at King Street. An address was presented to him, giving the progress of the Society, and he expressed himself much gratified with what he had seen and heard. Speaking of Co-operative Societies, he said that in his opinion "such associations were producing good results in promoting provident habits where the people were sufficiently enlightened to

manage them properly." His attention was drawn to the operation of the Income Tax upon Co-operative Societies, and he promised to give the subject his best attention. This was a matter which had caused a great deal of trouble and anxiety to the Committee and members of the Society, but the infliction of the tax was at a later period withdrawn.

An interesting and valuable object lesson in Co-operative production was given by the Society in its own Hall on April 7th and 9th, 1894. An Exhibition of Co-operative Products was opened by Mr. Hardern, and attended largely by the members and general public. The exhibits were tastefully arranged, the room was beautifully decorated, the people walked hither and thither marvelling at the accomplishments and possibilities of Co-operation, and listening to the sweet strains of music by the band. Everything went off smoothly, pleasantly, and successfully, and everybody said that the greatest want of modern times is to let the people know by some practical illustrations what the Co-operative movement is doing and can do for them.





CHAPTER XXIV.

The Oldham Congress.

Order is heav'n's first law : and this confest,
Some are, and must be, greater than the rest,
More rich, more wise ; but who infers from hence
That such are happier, shocks all common sense.

Pope.

THE year 1885 marks an important epoch in the history of Co-operation in Oldham. In May of that year the Parliament of the movement—the Annual Co-operative Congress—met under the hospitable auspices of the Oldham Societies, comprising the Oldham Industrial, the Oldham Equitable, the Lees, the Royton, and the Crompton Co-operative Societies, together with the Star Corn Millers' Society. It was a great undertaking, and the success achieved was only the natural outcome of the energy and enthusiasm that were thrown into the work. The invitation to Congress to hold its meeting in Oldham was given in 1884, when the Congress sat at Derby, by Mr. Daniel Fennel, representing the Industrial Society. To show that the town was worthy of a visit from the Co-operators of the United Kingdom, Mr. Fennel mentioned what had been done by the Co-operators of Oldham. Their quarterly business amounted to £150,000, although the members of the two Societies resided within a radius of four miles. The two Societies paid in profits £22,000 or £23,000 per quarter. From the time of the origin of the Societies attention had been paid to the work of education, and something like £600 per quarter was used in providing newsrooms, conversation-rooms, &c., for the members. The

Edwin Clegg, Lewis Rhodes, Samuel Hadfield, Luke Broadbent,
 John R. Marland, *Min. Sec.*, Samuel Platt, *Pres.*, James Churchman, George Lax,



John T. Gregory, *Secretary*, Frank Spencer, *Manager*.

STAR CORN MILL COMMITTEE.

Societies were also liberal subscribers to the charitable institutions of the town. With the aid of the Limited Companies that had been formed, the Oldham Co-operators had taken the staple trade of the town into their own hands, and they had shown that they could manage it as well as private firms. They sent Co-operators on the Manchester Exchange to compete with private traders and make profits for working people. He promised the delegates a hearty welcome if they decided to come to Oldham. His motion that the next Congress Meeting be held in Oldham was seconded by Mr. Kershaw, of the Oldham Equitable Society, and was adopted unanimously.

As the time drew nigh for the reception of the Congress, the members of the Oldham Societies determined that Mr. Fennel's promises should be fulfilled. A representative Committee was formed, and the work was entered into with a zeal that foreshadowed the most satisfactory results. Messrs. F. Hardern and L. Feber were appointed Chairmen, and Mr. J. R. Marland Secretary of the Committee.

Writing his usual description of the Congress to the *Co-operative News*, Mr. G. J. Holyoake said:—

The hospitality of Oldham was affluent, and so perfectly was everything planned that the leaders of the two great Stores of the town might be suspected of having had a rehearsal beforehand, and actually have entertained a private Congress in order to see how things would go. The entertainments and repasts were perfect. The Saturday commenced with a concert, at which Mr. Allen Mellor presided. At the Belle Vue dinner, though called upon without notice, Mr. Mellor made a prompt and diverting speech upon the toast of the "Queen and the People"—especially the People.

The following is a brief outline of the programme:—

Saturday, May 23rd.—Dinner provided for the united Board by the Reception Committee in the Town Hall at 1 p.m.

Evening.—Concert in the Town Hall. Chairman, Mr. Allen Mellor. Speakers, Messrs. Acland and Greening.

Sunday, May 24th.—Special sermons. Afternoon, 3 o'clock, at St. Mary's Church, sermon by the Lord Bishop of Manchester. Evening, 6-30, at Hope Chapel, Bottom-o'-th'-Moor, sermon by the Rev. R. M. Davies.

Monday, May 25th.—Inaugural address by Lloyd Jones, Esq., in the large room, Industrial Co-operative Society, King Street, at 10 a.m. Opening of the Exhibition of Co-operative Manufactures in St. Peter's National School, Union Street, by Alderman S. Buckley, J.P., J. T. W. Mitchell, Esq., in the chair. Luncheon given by the Reception Committee in the Baptist School, Union Street West, at 1-15 p.m. Afternoon,

at 2-15, Report of the Committee of Inquiry on "Co-operative Production," and on "The Progress of Co-operation in other Countries."

Paper on "The Limited Liability Movement in Oldham," by Mr. F. Hardern.

Paper on "Some Difficulties in the way of Co-operative Production," by Mr. T. W. Fenton. Evening-Conference of the Labour Association. Paper on "Land, Labour, and Capital—their Relations," by Mr. Bolton King, of London.

Tuesday, May 26th.—Chair taken at 10 a.m. by Mr. F. Hardern. Declaration of the result of the elections to the Central Board. Consideration of the reports of the Central Board. Luncheon at 1-15. Afternoon, at 2 p.m., discussions on Central Board's Report. Reception of delegates from other bodies. Decision where next Congress shall be held. Paper on "Education," by Mr. W. Crooks. Paper on "The Rise and Progress of Co-operation in Oldham," by Mr. L. Feber. Evening, at 7-30, *Conversazione* at the Oldham Equitable Co-operative Society.

Wednesday, May 27th.—Chair taken at 9 a.m. by Mr. L. Feber. Paper on "The Future of the Working Classes," by Mr. E. O. Greening. Votes of thanks, &c. Afternoon—Banquet at Belle Vue.

Such was the excellent bill of fare provided for the Co-operative delegates; but there were many other interesting items which were not included in the official programme. For instance, Mr. Holyoake, in the article already referred to, says:—

Many of the great workshops of Oldham, notably that of Platt's, were open to delegates to visit, and crowds of enterprising members of the Congress were at the doors as early as six o'clock in the morning. One day I went down to see the workmen come out. A man in the streets, of whom I made inquiries, said I did right to wait to see them, for I should never see a finer army of men under God. I answered that was what I wanted to see. The sight, when it came, was worth the seeing—every man was well alive.

Whit Monday was, of course, the great day of the Congress. Delegates began to arrive early, and by ten o'clock in the forenoon the Co-operative Hall, King Street, was filled with an expectant audience.

Mr. Fennel (Chairman of the Standing Orders Committee), introducing Mr. Lloyd Jones, said they had long desired to have the Congress held in Oldham, and now they had got it. The first business that he had to undertake was to give the delegates the most hearty welcome that he possibly could. In previous Congresses they had been occupied by inaugural addresses from gentlemen who were, to some extent, outside the movement, but what made his task very easy on this occasion was that he had to introduce a gentleman they all

knew. Had it been a duke, or a lord, or a marquis, or a bishop, he would have had to be studying for two or three weeks previously in order to find something to say to them, but when they looked at Mr. Lloyd Jones they knew that he needed no introduction, for he had been engaged for half a century in the movement in the interests of which they were then assembled.

Mr. Holyoake, in his Congress notes, said that—

The inaugural address was equal to the high expectation formed of it. Its comprehensiveness, its practical wisdom, its art in treating commercial Co-operation and the Co-operative features of other forms of Oldham commerce, made just impression on the auditory and the press, whose discussions of it, varied and extensive, in London and the journals of the district, were proofs of its eloquence and success. The unabated vigour, both of the address and in debate, displayed by the President was the admiration of all.

After the usual votes of thanks had been tendered to the President for his address, greetings of welcome and sympathy were extended to the delegates from the Oldham Chamber of Commerce, the Oldham Town Council, and the Oldham Trades Council. This being concluded, the large company of Co-operators formed themselves in procession, four deep, and marched to the National School, Union Street, where an Exhibition of Co-operative Products was to be opened by Mr. Alderman Buckley, of Oldham. Mr. J. T. W. Mitchell presided, and Mr. Buckley opened the Exhibition in a happy and instructive speech.

It goes without saying that at an Oldham Congress Oldham men would be to the fore. On the first day Mr. Frank Hardern, the President of the Oldham Industrial Society, read a paper, and on the second day he presided over the Congress, whilst Mr. Lewis Feber, President of the Oldham Equitable Society, read a paper. Both papers dealt with certain defined aspects of local Co-operation, and as such will always have a real historic value apart from the interest which we may feel in the opinions so decidedly expressed by the writers.

A vigorous and interesting discussion followed the reading of Mr. Hardern's paper, the chief point in dispute being the question as to whether the Oldham limiteds were Co-operative or not. Mr. E. O. Greening was strong in opposition, whilst Mr. J. F. Brearley proved himself a powerful supporter of the system advocated by the paper.

In the evening a most enjoyable conversazione was held in the Greenacres Co-operative Hall. During Tuesday's proceedings Mr. L. Feber, President of the Oldham Equitable Co-operative Society, read a valuable paper on "The Rise and Progress of Co-operation in Oldham."

The conclusion of the Congress was celebrated by a banquet, given to about 550 delegates, at the celebrated Belle Vue Gardens, Manchester. Several speeches were made at the usual after-dinner proceedings, but perhaps the most interesting one, historically, was given by Mr. Marcroft. Speaking of Oldham, he said:—

He appeared as one of the first Committee of the Wholesale and of the first Co-operative Society in Oldham. Oldham was a practical democracy of Societies and Companies with limited liability. In Oldham there were hundreds of families of working men living in their own houses, who had received assistance from the funds of their Co-operative Societies and their House Building Company. In Oldham there were the largest number of cotton spinning companies in the world. It was also one of the largest centres of the cotton velvet making trade, and had the largest cotton machine making works known. There were also large and prosperous steam boiler and engine making establishments, extensive gas meter making works, and lastly, though not the least, one of the largest sewing machine making works in the kingdom, whose machines can make 2,000 stitches per minute. The Societies and Companies in Oldham had their own Federative Insurance Company and a Cotton Buying Company. There was a cause for such wonderful effects. The early settlers in the district of Oldham had found out that to pay good wages and allow the workpeople to exercise their own judgment were the most appreciable means to induce the best informed men and women to come there to seek employment. The red and white roses of England Lancashire intelligence, and Yorkshire energy had raised a people whose industrial productions had found a market in every part of the civilised world.





CHAPTER XXV.

The "Record."

The Pen and the Press, blest alliance! combined
To soften the heart and enlighten the mind.

* * *

They were made to exalt us, to teach us, to bless,
Those invincible brothers, the PEN and the PRESS.

Critchley Prince.

In the early part of 1894 a suggestion was adopted that a monthly "Record" should be printed and circulated amongst the members. Such a course had long been attended with considerable success by other Societies, and it was thought that it might possibly be of some benefit at King Street. A Sub-Committee was appointed, consisting of Messrs. F. Hardern, J. W. Mayall, James Taylor, J. Farrer, and J. T. Taylor, to prepare and issue the new periodical. At first it was thought desirable to have a joint production in which all the Co-operative Societies in the parliamentary borough would be equally interested according to the number of members. The other Societies, however, were not desirous at the time, and the Industrial Society resolved to issue the publication on its own responsibility. Though the choice of editor fell upon Mr. J. T. Taylor, the whole of the members of the Committee worked heartily to make the "Record" worthy of the Society whose name it bore. Mr. Hardern and Mr. Farrer were ever ready with their facile pens, whilst Mr. Mayall was an occasional contributor. Mr. James Taylor was always a willing member of the staff, and fulfilled the onerous duty of reporting meetings and festivals. The services

of outside friends were also enlisted, and the pages of the little journal were enriched by the character sketches of the late James Dronsfield and the valuable chapters of local history by Mr. S. O. Ward.

Short biographies, with portraits, were given of men who had helped to build up the Society, thus enabling members to see the pictures of those to whom they owed so much. Reports of meetings, lectures, concerts, parties, and conferences conducted to make the paper a readable and enjoyable one. The object which the "Record" Committee had in view was to uplift as well as to amuse, to educate as well as to interest.

Naturally there were a few criticisms at the outset, but the members grew to appreciate the efforts put forth on their behalf, and the monthly issue, which began at 8,000 per month, was soon inadequate to meet the demand, and the number was increased to 9,000. This was satisfactory to those concerned in the production of the "Record," all of whom freely and gratuitously gave the best of their services to the movement.

In 1897 Mr. Taylor resigned his post as editor, and after a short interval Mr. Charles Owen was appointed his successor. In the year 1899 the work of the "Record" Committee was transferred to the Educational Committee, who have now full control of the Society's publication. The original features were so acceptable that they have been continued by the new Committee, whose efforts to keep the members fully abreast of all that is noblest and best in the Co-operative world are being widely appreciated.

Mr. Pingstone, of the Wholesale Society, writing in February, 1895, said :—

I think King Street is to be fairly congratulated upon a "Record" much in advance, both in get-up and in literary merit, too, of the average in our movement.





CHAPTER XXVI.

The Women's Guild.

And never tenderer hand than hers
Unknit the brow of ailing;
Her garments to the sick man's ear
Have music in their trailing.
Her presence lends it warmth and health
To all who come before it;
If woman lost us Eden, then
Such as she alone restore it.

Whittier.

IT has already been pointed out, in the course of this History, that women have taken an active and a very necessary part in the formation and development of the Society. Nor is the Industrial Society the only one that has benefited by their wise counsels and gentle influence. If every Society were to contribute a chapter on what it owes to women there would be a worthy volume of records of self-devotion, self-sacrifice, quiet but noble suffering, heroic determination, and implicit faith. Would the Store have ever emerged from the poetic dreamland had it not been for the encouraging support of the women? Had the women given it the cold shoulder it could not have lived. Had those Sunday dinners or teas been neglected or spoiled there would have been no Store. The Co-operative Wholesale Society is a powerful institution, but it would never have been born if the women had not cooked whilst the men thought, and schemed, and resolved. A bad cup of tea might have upset the most elaborate and best conceived schemes. The women who mopped the floors and

cooked the meals in connection with the first shop in Manchester Street, and the women who prepared and served the tea in the barn of Jumbo Farm, occupy as useful and honourable a place as the most graceful and accomplished orator that ever expounded the beauties and the utility of the Co-operative movement.

It is almost like using a hackneyed phrase to say that the Basket Power rules the movement. Yet it is true. It is just as true as the other hackneyed phrase that "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." It is because they are true and ever applicable that they have become hackneyed.

If the women's sympathy were withdrawn and the baskets ceased to go to the Store, Co-operation would collapse like the bursting of a bladder. That there is no fear of this calamity is evident from the rapid growth of the Women's Guild. Its numbers have increased enormously, and its possibilities for good in the movement are immeasurable.

The highest and the noblest phases of Co-operation can only be perpetuated and strengthened by instilling their truths into the minds of the children. "The boy is father to the man," and the girl of to-day is the basket carrier of to-morrow.

It was a long while before the Industrial Society made up its mind to join the Women's Guild. It could not be for want of information, nor of inspiration, for the Women's Guild held its second Annual Meeting in the Conversation-room of the King Street Store during the sitting of the Oldham Congress in 1885. It is a long interval from 1885 to 1898, but the gulf has been bridged over. The Oldham Industrial Branch owes its existence mainly to the perseverance and untiring exertions of Mr. F. Hardern. In the April, 1895, issue of the "Record" an article from his pen appeared, asking the question "Should we have a Women's Guild?"

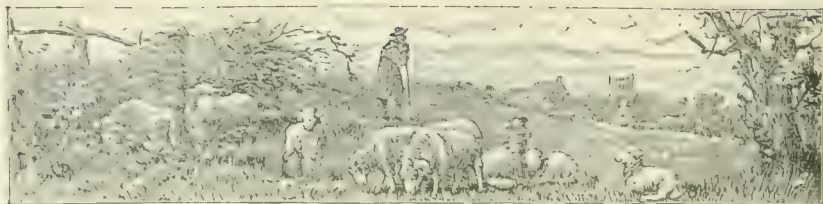
Nothing, however, was done until January, 1898, when Mr. Hardern again wrote to the "Record," and his efforts were supplemented by the enthusiasm and activity of a number of zealous workers in the cause. Ultimately a meeting was called for the 9th of March, 1898, by the Educational Committee, and the Chairman of that Committee, Mr. Joseph Taylor, presided over the proceedings. After an address from Miss Reddish, a resolution was heartily adopted to establish a branch of the Women's Guild. Mrs. Hardern was appointed

President, and, under her guidance, much useful work has been done by lectures on Ambulance Work, Sick Nursing, Cooking, and Co-operation.

The first roll of members contained 16 names, but by April, 1899, the list had increased to 140. Steadily pursuing its way, it has gone on multiplying until, at its Annual Meeting held April 21st, 1900, the Secretary reported that there were 222 members enrolled in the branch.

At the Ordinary General Meeting of the members of the Society held on February 28th, 1899, one of the members of the Guild proposed that £20 per annum should be granted from the Society's funds in aid of the Oldham Industrial Branch of the Women's Guild. There was no opposition to the resolution, which was accepted unanimously.





CHAPTER XXVII.

Stalwart Co-operators.

We are they who will not falter,
Many swords or few,
Till we make this earth the altar
Of a worship new ;
We are those who will not take
From prelate, priest, or code
A nearer law than brotherhood,
A higher law than good.

Edwin Arnold.

MARCROFT. The apportionment of praise or blame is always a delicate if not a difficult and a dangerous task. There need be, however, neither delicacy nor difficulty in selecting the one most entitled to honour in connection with most of the forward movements of local Co-operation. Like the immortal Abou Ben Adhem, his name leads all the rest. Whether the occasion be the teaching of a Co-operative class, the exhortation of people to temperance, the starting of a Store, the floating of a cotton mill, the building of a corn mill, or the launching of any new scheme which was likely to benefit the working man, the name of William Marcroft is ever conspicuously at the top of the list. His brain was ever active. One achievement with him was only the stepping stone to another. With no education save what was acquired in his spare moments, but with all the advantages that poverty could bestow, he ploughed his way successfully through the world. Whilst earning for himself a sufficient competency he indicated and paved the way for others to follow in his footsteps. Though he was never President of the Society he was, for a considerable period, a member of the Committee of Management,

where his buoyant energy and his unfailing resource made him a valuable servant of the Store and a leader of men.

BOOTH.—The first name in the honourable roll of Presidents is that of William Booth, who held that office from December, 1850. to October, 1851, when he was appointed Shop Secretary. He was a native of Oldham, where he was well known not only for the strong individuality of his character but for his remarkable energy in battling with the physical disability under which he laboured. He suffered from a paralytic stroke when only two years of age, which necessitated the use of arm crutches during the remainder of his life. Yet he piloted the Store boat over the shallow sandbanks until it reached deep waters.

LORD.—James Lord is one of the trio who make up the picture previously alluded to in connection with the Subscription Night of the Sun Mill. He was President of the Society when it began to rouse itself from its lethargic mood after the Crimean War. He occupied the position from 1858 until 1859, and during this period the receipts rose from £19,043 to £27,672. He was also a member of the first Educational Committee of the Society. As a social and political reformer he was well known and deservedly respected, and his interest in educational matters was fitly recognised by his fellow-townsmen, who elected him to serve them on the School Board. He retained the position for six years, when failing health compelled him to retire.

BOOTH.—The Industrial Society owes a good deal to the Booth family. Like his brother, John Booth was one of the real founders of the Store. William was the first President; John was on the first Committee, was appointed No. 1 Shopman at the first shop, was on the first Library or Educational Committee, and was one of the three who collected 80 volumes for the first library.

LEES. The third of the remarkable trio of earnest Co-operators who assembled around that tub on a Sun Mill Subscription Night was James Lees. He was a Co-operator before the Industrial Society was formed. A band of about

a dozen men, amongst whom James Lees was conspicuous for his zeal and energy, commenced business in a shop next to what is now the Grapes Inn, Yorkshire Street. Things went on smoothly for a time, but one morning the shop did not open as usual, and an inquiry revealed the unpleasant fact that the shopman had left without notice and migrated to parts unknown. That caused the Society to collapse. In connection with the Industrial Society he rendered yeoman's service. At the Preliminary Meeting, November 13th, 1850, he was appointed a Trustee, which included a seat on the Committee. He was the first Shop Manager when the office was an honorary one. He was Treasurer from 1852 to 1860. He again served on the Committee from 1865 to 1866, and from 1871 to 1875. He was President from October, 1864, to January, 1865, and again from April, 1866, to July, 1866. He was one of the first members of the Educational Committee. He was one of the few who struggled to raise the "£56 odd" to start the Society, and he lived to see the capital £108,125, and the sales steadily increase from £1,868 to £349,835. He died in 1890, aged eighty-four years.

SCHOFIELD. It is impossible to fully estimate the services rendered to the Store by James Schofield. He gave help and counsel when help and counsel were needed. He presided over the deliberations of the Society during its most critical period. From 1854 to 1858 was an anxious time for even the most enthusiastic Co-operator. But he held on until he saw the sun tinting the horizon and the mists disappear and the billows calm down. He saw the boat skimming swiftly and safely along before he let go the helm. He was a worker as well as a guide. He it was who was not too proud to mop the floor.

HEWKIN. Another of the quiet band of devoted workers in the cause of Co-operation was Henry Hewkin. In season and out of season he stuck fast to the principles of the movement. He was not only a brain worker, he was a hand worker as well, and many a time his services as a joiner were, in the early days of the Society, brought into requisition. A specimen of his handiwork was sent to the South Kensington Exhibition in the form of a model of the Sun Mill, of which he was the

first Chairman. The model consisted of 1,862 pieces, which represented the year of the Christian era when the Exhibition was held. The model was not exhibited, as it unfortunately came to grief before it was unpacked. Mr. Hewkin, like Mr. Marcroft, was not anxious for Presidential honours, but served a useful career on the General, Educational, and Building Committees.

CHEETHAM.—John Cheetham joined the Oldham Industrial Co-operative Society, which was then in its infancy, in 1852, and soon began to manifest an interest in its welfare. He served for a time on the Educational Committee; and on April 4th, 1860, he succeeded in obtaining a seat on the General Committee. He was a member of this Committee about five years, during a portion of which time he was President of the Society; and after an interval of eleven years he was again elected, and served in that capacity until April, 1881.

HILTON.—A familiar figure in connection with the Store was James Hilton. He joined the Society in the early fifties, and was elected on the Committee of Management on March 13th, 1861. He sat on the Committee from March, 1861, to October, 1864; from April 12th, 1865, to April 16th, 1866; from January 9th, 1867, to January 9th, 1868; and from October 11th, 1882, to July 9th, 1889. He filled the office of President of the Society from October 14th, 1863, to October 17th, 1864; from July 17th, 1865, to April 16th, 1866; and from January 10th, 1867, to January 9th, 1868. On July 2nd, 1869, he was appointed Treasurer to the Society, and this office of trust he retained until age and a comfortable competency enabled him to resign in September, 1882. As will be observed from his terms of service on the Committee, he was immediately re-elected a member of the Committee after his resignation of the Treasurership. In September, 1884, he was elected on the Committee of the Co-operative Wholesale Society, Manchester, and he retained the confidence of its members until his death on the 18th, of January, 1890.

HILTON.—Reference has already been made to the valuable assistance given by women in the early days of the Society. The most conspicuous of these was Mrs. Ann Hilton.

When the Stores started in 1850 she took as great an interest in the scheme as did her brothers, William and John Booth, the former of whom was the first President of the Society, and the latter a member of the first Board of Directors. The shop in Manchester Street taken for the Store was in the immediate vicinity of her home, and many were the meetings held in her house after the shop had closed at night to talk matters over. In this way she became conversant with most of the business of the Society; but her sympathies were of a more active character than those of a mere listener. She became a member of the Society, being the first lady member, and in various ways assisted the Committee in the discharge of their duties. Sundays were busy days for the officials and Committee, as everything possible was overhauled and put in order for the coming week. After everything had been turned topsy-turvy and put back in its place it was generally left to Mrs. Hilton to clean and tidy up the floor. In addition to this she was the Sunday cook for the Committee. As they often met in the morning, and worked on during the day, they had no time to go home to dinner. On these occasions Mrs. Hilton would obtain provisions from the shop and make them a dinner. As the shop did not contain any animal meat save, perhaps, a little bacon, the dinners were of a simple and primitive character. At a later period, and when the butchering business had been started, she would often purchase the beef that was left on a Saturday night, and having made it into soup would distribute it to the poor around.

FENNEL. Mr. Daniel Fennel became a member of the Industrial Society in February, 1863. In 1868 he was appointed to the directorate, upon which he remained (with about six months' exception) to October, 1890. He was appointed, April 16th, 1875, President of the Society, and retained that position to October 14th, 1881. In this honourable post he exhibited great ability. He was plain, but straightforward and courteous to all. Mr. Fennel represented the district on the Co-operative Union, he being appointed at Edinburgh Congress in 1883, and ceasing his connection at Ipswich Congress in 1889. At the Glasgow Congress in 1890 he was made an honorary member of the Union, and he retains that position at the present.

BREARLEY.—John Frost Brearley was only eight years of age when the Society started. He was elected a member of the General Committee before he was twenty-four, and by the time he had reached the age of twenty-nine he was President of the Society. Such progress indicates ability, activity, and integrity. He took a prominent part in everything appertaining to the welfare of the Store. He was a member of the Committee for a period of nine years, four of which he served as President. He rendered faithful service as a member of the Congress Board, as a Committee-man of the Wholesale Society, and to the Building Committee in connection with his own Society.

HARDERN.—Probably the man who, next to William Marcroft, has earned the widest reputation as a local Co-operator is Mr. Frank Hardern. He joined the Industrial Society on May 28th, 1872. He soon began to take an active interest in the Society's proceedings, and in 1877 he was elected a member of the Educational Committee. After five years' service on this Committee he was transferred to the General Committee, where he was destined to make his mark. In 1882 he was appointed President of the Society, and he filled the office with distinction for twelve years. He was Chairman on the second day of the Oldham Congress. His connection with the Central Board dates from 1889. In 1893 he was made a Justice of the Peace, and in 1899 he filled the honoured position of President of the Co-operative Congress, at Liverpool, and delivered the inaugural address. During his presidency of the King Street Society the members increased from 8,091 to 12,252, and the yearly trade from £330,382 to £378,333.

GEE.—Mr. William Gee was not the first Manager of the Store, but his geniality and his friendly nature endeared him to the members to such an extent that he and the Store seemed inseparable. It has already been stated that he commenced serving the Society as a porter for thirteen shillings per week. It speaks volumes for his faithfulness and worthiness that seven years afterwards he was appointed General Manager, a position which he filled for twenty-nine years with exceptional success. Whilst every credit must be given to a Committee

for the safe conduct of a Store, it must be admitted that its commercial prosperity depends largely on the Manager. Mr. Gee's accomplishments seemed to cover every part of the Society's business, and it was no wonder to anyone who knew his remarkable aptitude that the trade grew by leaps and bounds. He started as Manager in 1869 with 2,800 members and an annual trade of £41,622. When he retired in 1898 the members numbered 13,360 and the year's trade receipts amounted to £411,555.

BROOKS.—On the retirement of Mr. Gee there was some little curiosity as to who would be appointed his successor. The Committee, however, seemed to have no difficulty in finding a man who appeared to possess most of the qualifications necessary for a successful Manager. In Mr. Peter Brooks they had a man in whom they could place the fullest confidence, whilst his long connection with the Society had enabled him to acquire knowledge and experience which would be of great value to him in the new appointment. He had been Secretary to the Society for a quarter of a century in addition to two years' occupation as Assistant Secretary. The requirements of the Store were, therefore, familiar to him, and the continuous prosperous career of the Society was assured.

SCHOFIELD.—Thomas Schofield was one of the founders of the Oldham Industrial Co-operative Society. He attended the first meeting for the election of officials, himself and John Booth Lees being selected as Auditors. On October 20th, 1858, he was elected the first permanent Manager, and subsequent events proved the wisdom of the choice. His unassuming character, his integrity, and ability added largely to the prestige and success of the business, and he is credited with much that is sound and valuable in the Society's management. He also took an active part in the establishment of the Limited Liability movement, and was one of the first subscribers to the Oldham Manufacturing Company, now named the Sun Mill. On February 4th, 1863, he was elected a Director of the Sun Mill for three years, but on April 29th, 1865, he resigned this office and was appointed Salesman and Marketsman, in which position he accompanied the Manager to Liverpool to buy cotton. This appointment necessitated his retirement from the position of Store Manager.

MAYALL.—Mr. J. W. Mayall first became connected with the Society about thirty-three years ago. For the greater part of this period he has been honoured with the confidence of the members, having served on the Educational and General Committees. He was Vice-Chairman of the latter Committee for eight years, and President of the Society for four years. In the year 1895 he was selected to represent the Society's interest on the Board of the Sun Mill.

WATSON.—The Chairman of the Joint Jubilee Committee, and the Chairman of the Industrial Society's Jubilee Committee, is Mr. Thomas A. Watson, who filled the office of President of the Society from October, 1898, to October, 1900. He was born in South Wales in 1844. He served his apprenticeship as a smith in his native town, after which he migrated to England, arriving in Oldham in 1875. He first joined the Equitable Society, but, removing to the West End, he transferred his membership to the Industrial, whose members have always shown a thorough appreciation of his abilities and geniality.

RODGERS. Another of the active band of workers who have helped to build up the Society is Mr. Thomas Rodgers, whose connection with it dates from 1865. Ten years later he was elected on the Committee of Management and, in 1879, a Superintendent of the Check Department being considered necessary, he was appointed to the office. In 1882 he was promoted to the position of Treasurer to the Society, which office he held until he was in a position to retire from active service in 1899.

TAYLOR. The present occupant of the Presidential chair is Mr. James Taylor, whose membership of the Society extends over twenty years. During that time he has served on the Building Committee three years, and on the Committee of Management eight years. He was elected President on October 15th, 1900.

HARRISON. A good Secretary is like a good encyclopædia. He is the repository of all Co-operative information; you inquire from him about everything. He is the guide and

counsel of the Committee, he is the trusted friend and adviser of the members. Mr. Thomas Harrison cannot yet boast of a lengthy experience as Secretary because he was only appointed to the office about two years ago, but he was Assistant Secretary for eleven years preceding his promotion, in addition to serving five years as a clerk in the office. His selection for official work was the reward of faithful and honourable service in the Store. He entered the lists of Co-operative employes as a check boy in 1874. He graduated behind the counter, and was transferred to the office in 1882. In 1887 he was elected Assistant Secretary, and in November, 1898, he received the appointment of Secretary to the Society. He is only 38 years of age, but he is already proving himself a good Secretary.

There have been many others whose good work entitles them to honourable mention, but a detailed account of their services would only be a repetition of stories already told. Such men as Geo. Winterbottom, John Folson, Swainson Howarth, John Booth Lees, Henry Barlow, Edward Barlow, John Davenport, Edward Ingham, Joseph Barber, and William Booth Lees did much towards improving the social condition of their fellow-men, and to their credit let it be said that they left the world better than they found it.

Appended is a list of those who at one time or other have been called upon to preside over the destinies of the Society. The simple fact that they received the confidence of their colleagues and the members is almost sufficient to stamp them as stalwart Co-operators.



List of Presidents.

NAME.	ELECTED.
WILLIAM BOOTH.....	November, 1850.
CHARLES WILD	October, 1851.
JOHN LEES	January, 1852.
JOSEPH WILD	January, 1853.
THOMAS BARDSLEY	January, 1854.
JAMES SCHOFIELD	July, 1854.
JAMES LORD.....	January, 1858.
FESTUS FIELDEN	April, 1859.
EDMUND BARRATT	January, 1860.
GEORGE MARKS	February, 1860.
JOHN CHEETHAM	June, 1861.
ISAIAH LEE	October, 1861.
JAMES HILTON.....	October, 1863.
JAMES LEES	October, 1864.
EPHRAIM OGDEN	January, 1865.
JAMES HILTON.....	July, 1865.
JAMES LEES	April, 1866.
MERRICK ARMSTRONG.....	July, 1866.
JAMES HILTON.....	January, 1867.
ALFRED WARD.....	January, 1868.
THOMAS GREENHALGH	April, 1868.
JOHN FROST BREARLEY ...	April, 1871.
DANIEL FENNEL.....	April, 1875.
ORLANDO WARD.....	October, 1881.
JOHN ORMROD.....	April, 1882.
FRANK HARDERN	August, 1882.
JOHN WILLIAM MAYALL ...	October, 1894.
THOMAS A. WATSON.....	October, 1898.
JAMES TAYLOR.....	October, 1900.

List of Permanent Officials.

GENERAL MANAGERS.

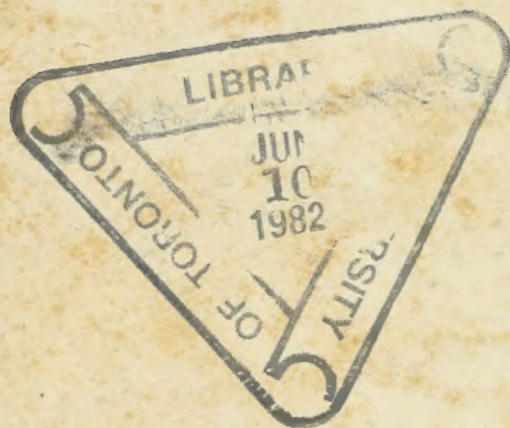
NAME.	APPOINTED.
THOMAS SCHOFIELD*	October, 1858.
WILLIAM PEEL	May, 1865.
WILLIAM GEE	January, 1869.
PETER BROOKS	November, 1899.
First Permanent Manager.	

SECRETARIES.

WILLIAM BOOTH*	January, 1858.
WILLIAM PEEL	January, 1861.
JOHN HOLLINHEAD	December, 1863.
RICHARD TAYLOR	May, 1865.
RALPH CROMPTON	March, 1866.
T. L. HAIRSINE.....	November, 1870.
PETER BROOKS	October, 1873.
THOMAS HARRISON	November, 1898.
First Permanent Secretary.	

TREASURERS.

WILLIAM BOOTH LEES*.....	March, 1860.
WILLIAM BOOTH.....	January, 1861.
ROBERT DAVIES	September, 1866.
JAMES HILTON.....	July, 1869.
THOMAS RODGERS	September, 1882.
JOSHUA NEWTON	August, 1899.
First Permanent Treasurer.	



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